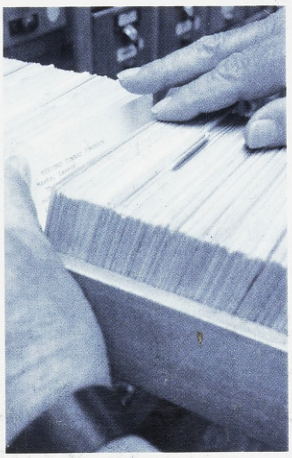
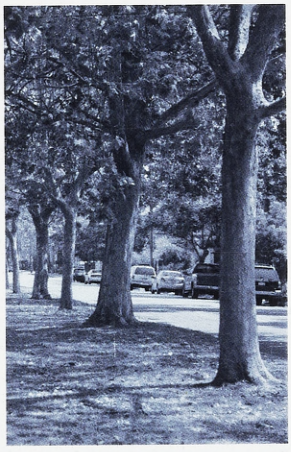
ON BECOMING A HISTORIC RESIDENT

Brock Winstead





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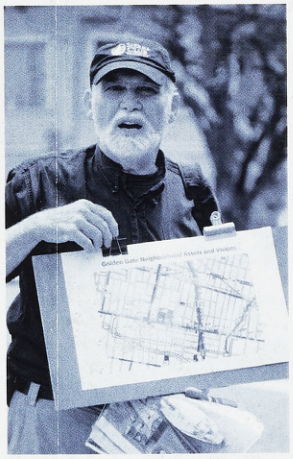

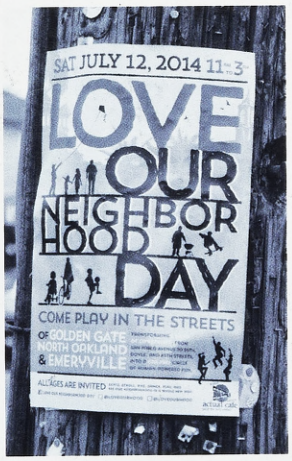
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LOVE OUR NEIGHBOR HOOD DAY
COME PLAY IN THE STREETS
OF GOLDEN GATE NORTH OAKLAND & EMERYVILLE
ALL AGES ARE INVITED

Bay historians

COMMONS ARCHIVE

PHOTO

FARMERS
MARKET

Susan Park
business in
manager at
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Photo by Pam

HISTORIC

Mural paint
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Robin Freem
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Photo by Pam

PHOTO KEY (IMAGES LEFT TO RIGHT)

FARMERS' MARKET Susan Park, food business incubator manager at Phat Beets Food Justice Market & CSA 2014 Photo by Pamela Palma	**HISTORY RESOURCE** Card catalog at Oakland Public Library's Oakland History Room 2014	**NEIGHBORHOOD CELEBRATION** Golden Gate Branch Library's block party to celebrate Commons Archive 2017 Photo by Amber Hoy	**HISTORIC SITE** Charles Klinkner's real estate 'headquarters' in the town of Golden Gate 1885 Courtesy Emeryville Historical Society	**HISTORIC SITE** Father Aidan McAleenan, pastor of St. Columba, a neighborhood church since the 1880s 2015 Photo by Matt Dibble
HISTORIC SITE Mural painted by Dan Fontes in 1999 on the old Golden Gate Recreation Center 2015	**NEIGHBORHOOD ACTIVIST** Family photo of Ruth Lasartemay with mother, one of the founders of the East Bay Negro Historical Society 1947	**HISTORIC SITE** Stanford Avenue greenway, once tracks for the Southern Pacific Railroad & the East Bay Electric Lines 2015	Commons Archive COMMONS ARCHIVE commons archive Commons Archive Commons Archive COMMONS ARCHIVE Commons Archive COMMONS ARCHIVE	**HISTORIC SITE** The Lasartemay's East Bay Negro Historical Society Museum at 4519 Grove Street (now MLK Jr. Way) 1976 Courtesy African American Museum & Library at Oakland
LONG-TIME NEIGHBOR Robin Freeman, planner & environmentalist at Communities' Crossing, a series of neighborhood history events 2014 Photo by Pamela Palma	**NEIGHBORHOOD CELEBRATION** Promotional poster for 'Love Our Neighborhood Day,' a one-day event closing part of San Pablo Avenue 2014 Photo by Gene Anderson	**NEIGHBORHOOD ACTIVISTS** The Lasartemays, founders of the East Bay Negro Historical Society Oakland Tribune, 1981 Courtesy African American Museum & Library at Oakland	**NEIGHBORHOOD ACTIVISTS** Aztec dancers Gerardo Omar Marin & Ernesto Hernandez Olmos at PLACE for Sustainable Living's annual Creating Commons event 2014	

Photos by marksearch unless noted

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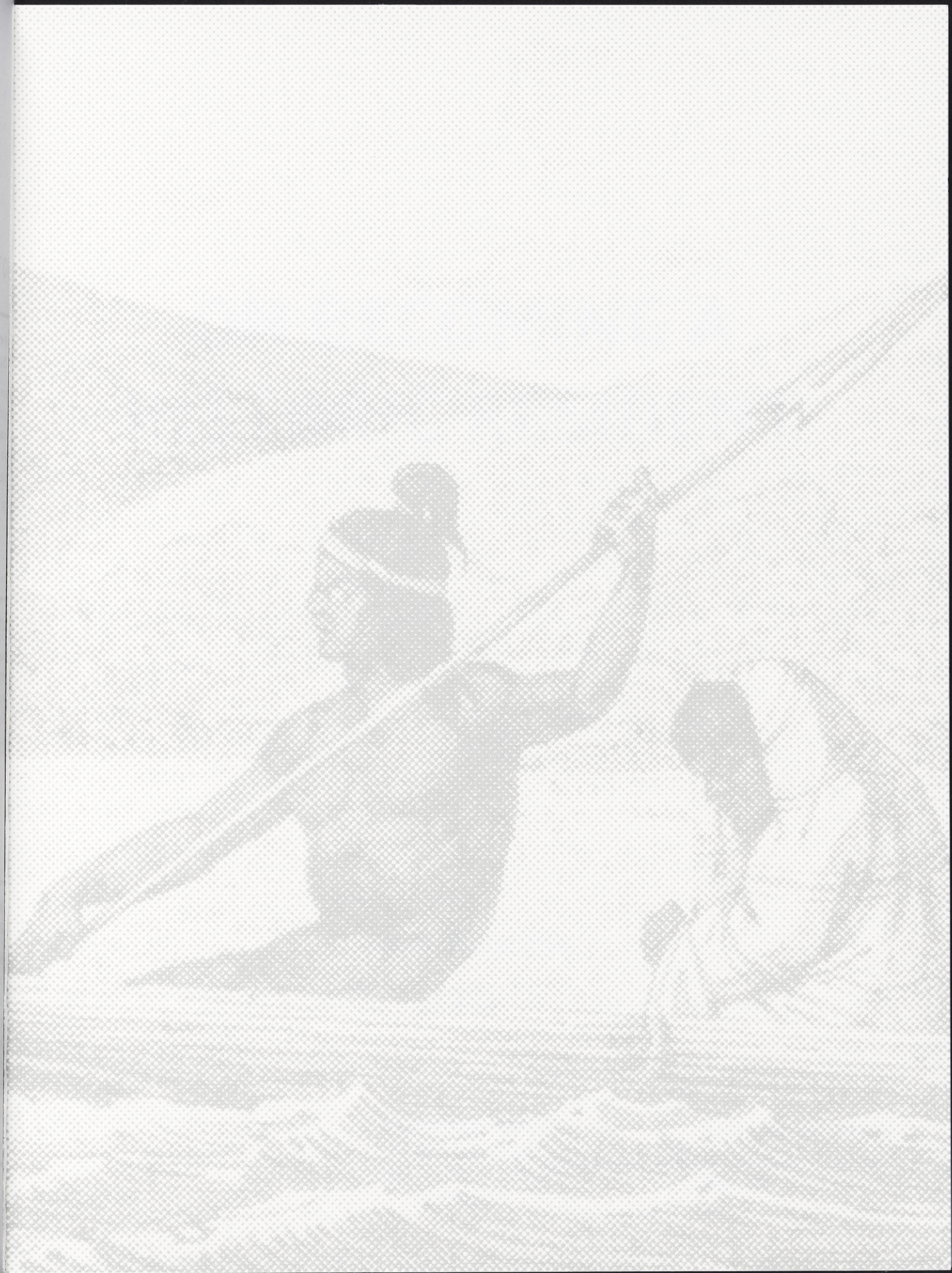

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Engraving of indigenous Ohlone in a tule boat on the San Francisco Bay, 1916

Courtesy *Images of America: Emeryville*, Arcadia Publishing

ON BECOMING A HISTORIC RESIDENT

Brock Winstead

2015

Oakland Public Library
Golden Gate Branch
5606 San Pablo Avenue
Oakland, CA

COMMONS ARCHIVE

Collaborators

marksearch

Golden Gate Branch Library

Oakland Public Library

Oakland Public Library's Oakland History Room

African American Museum & Library at Oakland

Friends of the Golden Gate Library

Golden Gate Community Association

PLACE for Sustainable Living

Golden Gate Recreation Center

Emeryville Center of Community Life

Emeryville Historical Society

Emeryville Senior Center

North Oakland Senior Center

Kala Art Institute

Commons Archive

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Sue Mark gratefully acknowledges permission from Brock Winstead and *BOOM California* to reprint "On Becoming a Historic Resident."

Commons Archive is a project initiated by cultural researcher Sue Mark in collaboration with stakeholders in the Golden Gate Branch Library service area (North Oakland, South Berkeley, Emeryville). The views expressed by individuals or in materials developed as part of Commons Archive are representative of the project's collective conception and production and are not necessarily the views of the Oakland Public Library or any other individual involved.

INTRODUCTION

"Who are we? What is this place? Who does it belong to?"

"Sharing local history brings us closer together as things change."

–Golden Gate neighbors

Whose stories are preserved and whose are lost? This large question is at the heart of Commons Archive, a neighborhood memory bank organized by cultural researcher Sue Mark at North Oakland's Golden Gate Branch Library. Initiated in 2016 in response to profound demographic shifts impacting this community, Commons Archive includes materials, special programs and installations throughout the library. The archive's unconventional format highlights recollections that, if undocumented, will disappear.

Commons Archive honors neighbors' multiple roles as participants, narrators and creators of the many histories of this dynamically changing area. This neighborhood's lifecycle has moved at varying rates: over the past five years, this wedge of North Oakland, South Berkeley and Emeryville has experienced profound shifts, sparking debates among residents about local identity.

As a longstanding community anchor, the Golden Gate Branch Library bears witness to the neighborhood's changes. This branch has served hundreds of thousands of neighbors since opening its doors on December 15, 1918. From youth clubs to Diwali festivals, garden shows to film screenings, the library strives to reflect the diversity of the neighborhood.

Commons Archive enriches this goal by holding in place the stories of those who have lived here and providing access to these stories for years to come. As neighbors continue to flow through the community, the archive will stand to preserve these memories.

The Golden Gate Library Local Collection presents some materials that were, up until now, stored in basements, locked file cabinets and forgotten boxes. These newsletters, journals, unpublished papers, articles, scrapbooks and reports describe a neighborhood that has been and will continue to be supported by a vital network of local organizations. The Local

Collection brings together narratives of the dedicated efforts of neighbors and community-based organizations.

Commons Archive not only peels back the neighborhood's layers but also stretches towards the future. We hope that these materials will become an invaluable resource for neighbors and researchers. We invite you to add to this growing pool of information by commenting on these materials, sharing your experiences in the community and inviting your neighbor to join the process.

Sue Mark
Cultural Researcher
marksearch

Erin Sanders
Manager
Golden Gate Branch Library

2019

PREFACE
ON BECOMING A HISTORIC RESIDENT

When moving into a new home, most people think of renovation as a physical and structural process. This is not the case with Brock Winstead. After he and his wife moved into their Golden Gate home in 2011, he set out "to find out as much as I could about who had lived in this house and on this land before I got here. I started with the Native American people who lived here and worked my way up to the present day." A writer, editor and audio producer with a master's degree in urban planning, Brock is no stranger to deep research. With a penchant for following his curiosity, Brock embarked upon a year-long social and archeological excavation of his home. His research and musings first emerged as a series of blog posts where he raised personal questions about what it means to be a historic resident. Brock writes about the tangled question of who can claim original ownership of a home and in turn, a neighborhood.

I met Brock in 2014 during a neighborhood walking discussion, part of *Communities' Crossing*, the precursor to this Commons Archive project. He told me about his new weekly podcast, *The Eastern Shore*, where he engages in conversations with locals about issues impacting Oakland and the East Bay. For about a year, Brock produced close to 50 episodes, interviewing thinkers, change-makers and creatives like comedian W. Kamau Bell, writer Ishmael Reed, bike advocate Dave Campbell, and food policy expert Esperanza Pallana. Brock sat down with me for one of his early episodes to talk about my work with local history as a public resource, and in fair turnaround, I interviewed Brock to be part of a growing collection of oral histories from the Golden Gate neighborhood. The full interview transcript is in *Golden Gate Conversations*, another Golden Gate Library Local Collection title that includes transcripts from conversations I had with new and longtime neighbors.

During our interview, Brock shared some of his backstory. Brock and his wife Heather, relative newcomers to the neighborhood, first moved in as renters in 2006. After a few years, the spot began to feel like home. When the market crashed in 2008-09, the spiraling economy allowed them to purchase a house not too far from where they had been renting. Brock confessed that "essentially through the collective suffering of lots of people around us, we were suddenly able to afford to buy a house, where before we never thought we would be."

Writing about the history of his home and neighborhood was a cathartic process, a way to come to terms with what he calls the "blind luck" of now being a homeowner. His five-part blog posts parse history into decade-long chunks, starting with 'Part 1: Native Americans to 1848' and ending with 'Part 6: 1930 -1970', which is "on indefinite hold," according to his website. To research the genesis of what he now calls home, Brock scoured publicly accessible records in Oakland Public Library's Oakland History Room and the City's planning department. *BOOM California,* the UC Press journal that publishes provocative think-pieces about social, political and cultural issues impacting California, picked up Brock's writing. His essay, a compact version of his blog posts, is punctuated with curated maps illustrating the layered passing of people through this region. Believing in the importance of freely sharing this research, *BOOM's* editors generously granted me permission to reprint Brock's essay.

How **do** we define who is a historic resident? Brock candidly grapples with his responsibility and role in the changes that the Golden Gate neighborhood is experiencing with no clear answer emerging. Subsequent to the *BOOM* piece, Brock's writing ran in *Slate*, an online magazine, receiving a much wider readership. Following his essay, hundreds of readers weighed in on the contested sources, meanings and complications of gentrification. These comments are included here, a critical corollary to the story of neighbors, neighborhoods and history.

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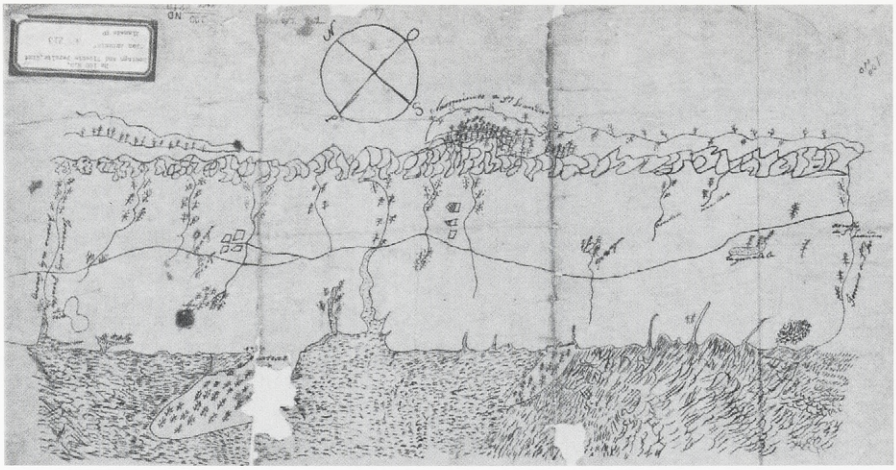

Hand-drawn map of the Peralta Rancho San Antonio land grant, 1840s. COURTESY OF THE BANCROFT LIBRARY.

BROCK WINSTEAD

On Becoming a Historic Resident of Oakland

When knowing your history doesn't help

In March of 2011, after signing our names so many times that our wrists ached, my wife and I took into our weakened hands the keys to a modest wooden rectangle on a slightly larger rectangle of dirt in Oakland's Golden Gate neighborhood. Never mind that we bought it with borrowed money, we now "owned" a home.

This was something we never thought we'd be able to do when we moved to California in 2004, each from states with far lower costs of living. By the time we finished graduate school and found satisfying but not extravagantly compensated jobs, we'd consigned buying a house in the Bay Area to the same category of laughable impossibilities as commuting to work in a flying jet car or playing the harp.

The messy pop of the housing bubble changed all that. As sources of easy money shriveled and foreclosures swelled, home prices dropped precipitously. We came out okay; our jobs were stable. The crash—that is, the collective misery of those around us—gave us the opportunity to join one of California's long traditions: the land grab.

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DOI: 10.1525/boom.2014.4.4.37.

We'd been renting in this neighborhood in Oakland's northwestern corner for more than four years before we bought. We'd seen the area change and mostly, we felt, for the better. Three cafés had opened since we arrived in 2006, followed shortly by a cupcake shop, then a knitting and fabric store. When the latte-drinking, cupcake-eating knitters arrive, you know your neighborhood has arrived, too.

We watched these changes accrete happily, first as renters who were glad to have a spot to grab coffee or a beer just a short walk from our place. Later, as owners, we were excited to see this process of change continue south along the main thoroughfare from the cottage we'd rented toward the house we bought, reassuring us in our investment with every half block's advance.

This process of change, of course, has a name. "Gentrification" is a dumb word, in the same way that a hammer is a dumb tool, and likewise it must be used with special care. To a lot of people who use the word, everything looks like a nail. It floats in a cloud of imprecise definition, like "middle class" or "pornography." But we know it when we see it.

So we knew that what gentrification meant in our neighborhood wasn't just coffee shops opening in long-vacant storefronts. In April 2010, the national brokerage firm ZipRealty named our zip code the second "hottest" in the entire country, as measured by the percentage over asking prices that houses were fetching. This new rebound boom, like those that had come before, was producing winners and losers. We happened to be on the winning side, almost entirely owing to forces beyond our control: the timing of our lives with respect to the crash, the untimely death of a relative whose modest bequest constituted our down payment, and the fact that we'd been born white and able-bodied and the beneficiaries of good educations at great universities. Even that good fortune, however, would not have been sufficient had many others not lost their homes, savings, and livelihoods in the crash.

Plenty of others could see the changes in our neighborhood. To some, these changes spelled opportunity. Actually, they spelled "NOBE." In the fall of 2012, local real estate agents attempted to brand our area "North Oakland/Berkeley/Emeryville." One agent produced a video cataloguing the virtues of "NOBE," interviewing beaming local residents, all relatively recent arrivals like us. It was as if the neighborhood had been a blank spot on the map prior to 2009 and had now been christened by its discoverers in the language of their aspirations.

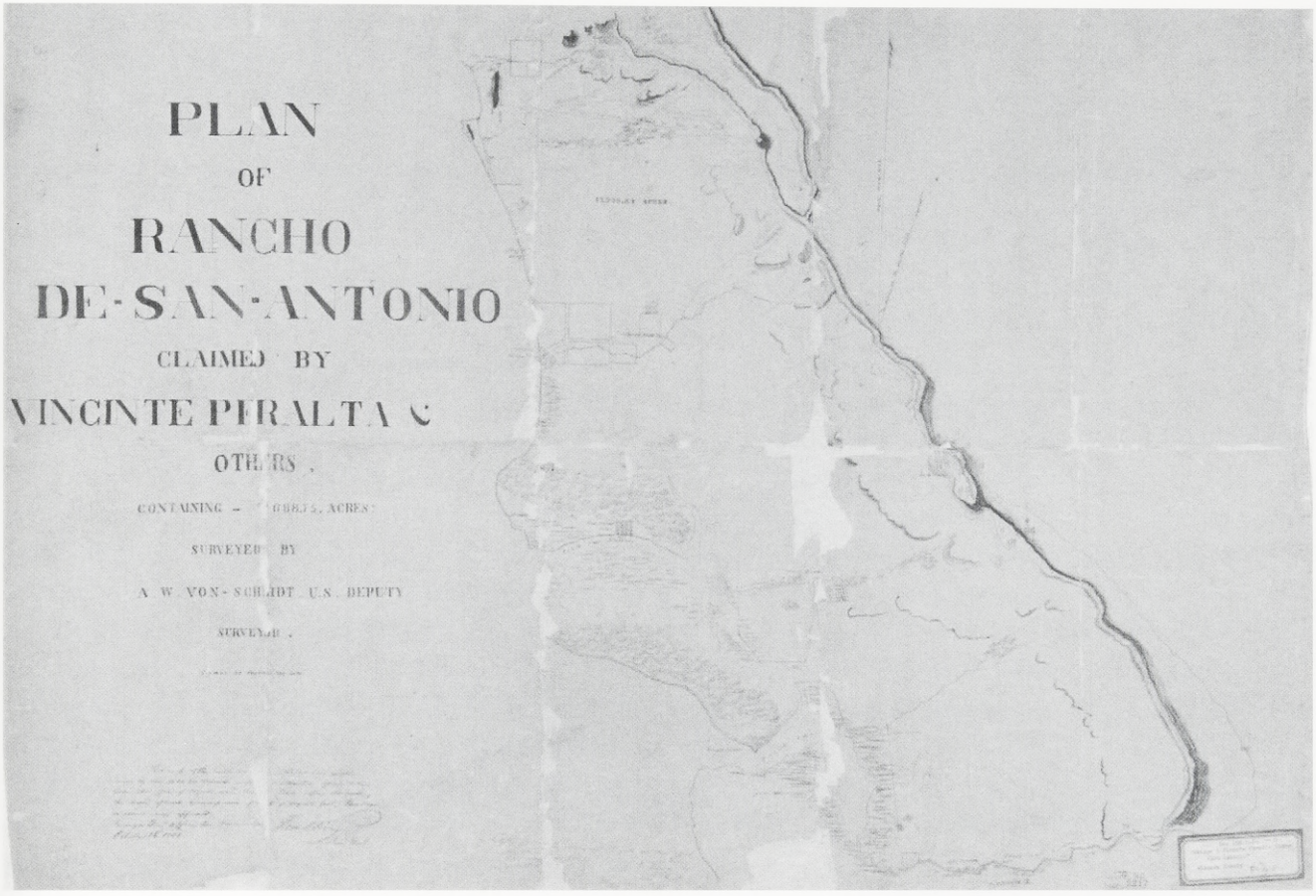
I wasn't the only one who found the tone (and tone-deafness) of the NOBE video off-putting. A contingent of local activists had been working to slow displacement and keep the neighborhood affordable and livable for the people who were already there, not just the café-and-cupcakes set that was growing with every "SOLD" sign. These activists saw the rapid increase in housing prices in the area not as opportunity but as oppression, a further kick to a population that was already down. The video was like cold water dropped onto their hot skillet.

The reactions and counter-reactions boiled up, among other places, on our neighborhood email lists and web message boards. I was only an observer to the impassioned debates that followed—I try to avoid arguing on the Internet for my own mental health—but they gave me a lot to chew on. I thought of myself as someone who cared about affordable housing and creating neighborhoods that are accessible to everyone. I agreed, I believed, with the local activists about the problem, and I shared their despair at a lack of substantive local solutions.

I thought I was on their side, but here they were talking about people like me—people who had moved to the neighborhood fairly recently, who had bought houses in the depressed post-crash market, who enjoyed and supported new local businesses—as if we were the enemy. Our presence was an offense. Our individual and collective actions, we were told, were leading to the displacement of the neighborhood's "historic residents."

I knew what they meant by that phrase: the mostly lower-income African Americans who had predominated in the

If the local antigentrification crowd could use history as a cudgel, perhaps I could use it as a shield.



Watercolor and ink map showing settlements and geographical features of Rancho de San Antonio, 1852. COURTESY OF THE BANCROFT LIBRARY.

neighborhood before people like me started moving in. But that rested on a very narrow definition of history. The loudly denounced NOBE video pretended the neighborhood sprang to life fully formed from the head of the god Re/Max around 2009. The antigentrification activists were doing the same thing, except they'd set the dial on their time machine to about 1970. While I remain wholly sympathetic to those struggling to remain resident in this community, the "historic resident" phrase brought home a more complicated truth about gentrification. This place was not always thus. Neighborhoods are constantly in flux, and change itself is not necessarily where the problem lies.

About six months before the neighborhood shouting matches reached peak ALL CAPS online, the Census Bureau released the full archive of the 1940 census. My wife and I dug into the forms to find out who had lived in our house seventy-two years before we moved in. We also scanned through the records for the rest of the neighborhood to get a sense of the area's demographics. The vast majority of residents were working-class laborers and craftspeople. There were some middle-class professionals and a few wealthier outliers. And they were almost all white.

This made me want to know more than the census's seventy-two-year-old snapshot could tell me. The papers we'd signed said our house was built in 1905. Who lived in our house in the century before us, and who lived on the land before the house was built? Who was displaced when they moved in? If this neighborhood had seen demographic and economic shifts many times before, was the present wave of change just part of a long pattern?

Of course, I had some self-interest in this investigation. If the local antigentrification crowd could use history as a cudgel, perhaps I could use it as a shield. I'm not a historian, but I could play one on the Internet. So that's what I did. I spent the better part of six months, in-between real work, researching this history. I learned where and how to find old property transfer records. I massaged archival newspaper databases to find traces of long-dead real estate

speculators. I located and interviewed the great-grandson of the man who built my house. I had a great time.

By the time I was done playing historian, I'd answered all of the questions that I had started with. But I also realized that history raised even more questions, and it didn't provide many of the answers I really needed.

The story of my house starts like the story of most of California. The original historical residents of this area, at least as far back as we have any archaeological and historical records, were the Huchiun band of the Ohlone people, whose ancestors migrated here tens of thousands of years ago. They ate from the land and drank from the creek that flows just 750 feet south of my house, now buried underground in a culvert. Their territory bordered areas held by other Ohlone groups with whom they traded, married, and occasionally fought. They had no system of individual land ownership, but this place was theirs—until it wasn't.

In the first decades of the sixteenth century, Spanish explorers made their way across Mexico and claimed the land to the north for the Spanish crown—even though they had no idea what it was they were claiming. They thought this part of the world was an island, and they named it accordingly after a mythical island from a novel published in 1510: California. By the middle of the 1500s, California was firmly a part of Spanish territory, part of the larger Nueva España. Nobody had the courtesy to inform the Huchiun Ohlone that their neighborhood had been renamed. The Spanish didn't know they existed. Their earliest explorations up the Pacific coast missed the San Francisco Bay entirely.

It wasn't until the late 1760s that Spain began settling the northern part of its claim, by then named Alta California. Spanish settlers developed a tripartite pattern of Franciscan missions, forts (*presidios*), and towns (*pueblos*). They treated native populations such as the Huchiun Ohlone as cogs in their engine of empire: they were removed from the land, forcibly converted, and put to work in the missions' agricultural and craft operations. Missions, *presidios*, and pueblos were small polygons of order in the great unruly geometry of Alta California, with wide stretches between largely ungoverned by the Spanish. They wanted a way to control the rest of the territory and put it to productive use. In the 1780s, they began granting vast tracts of land to prominent men, often as a reward for military service. They called these grants ranchos.

Luis María Peralta, an ex-military and later civilian official in Pueblo San José, was the recipient of one such grant. One warm mid-August day in 1820, Peralta rode north with a small party of companions and a bag lunch. He marked out a claim of nearly 45,000 acres bounded by creeks on the north and south, hills on the east, and the bay on the west, with views of the San Francisco peninsula on the other side. The land would one day comprise all of the present-day cities of Albany, Berkeley, Emeryville, Oakland, Piedmont, Alameda, and part of San Leandro. Peralta called it Rancho San Antonio.

The next year, after a decade-long war, New Spain became the independent Empire of Mexico. Peralta's claim on his rancho was secure, but he never moved there himself. Instead, his four sons made Rancho San Antonio their home. They moved up from San José during the 1820s and 1830s, bringing their families, building houses, barns, and corrals, and establishing a bustling ranch, with over 2,000 horses and 8,000 head of cattle spread across the land at its peak. Their father had helped clear the land of its previous inhabitants in his soldiering days. But it was the sons who first truly gentrified my neighborhood, in an etymologically literal way not seen since. For twenty-five years after Mexican independence, as far as we can tell, the vast rancho of this landed gentry was largely untroubled by anything but the vicissitudes of weather and perhaps the usual quarrels between brothers and their families.

The fictional island namesake of California was rich in gold, but Spanish settlers never found the precious yellow metal here. James Marshall fulfilled that aspiration when, on the morning of 24 January 1848, he spotted shining nuggets in a mill trace in the Sierra foothills. News spread slowly in the days before widespread telegraphy, but by 1849 the Gold Rush was on.

Another rich nugget of news was also creeping across the continent. Just nine days after Marshall's find, Mexican and American authorities signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in Mexico City, ending the war between their nations and ceding a huge swath of the West, including Alta California, to the United States. The negotiated treaty included an article guaranteeing the validity of Spanish and later Mexican land grants. When the US Senate ratified the treaty in March, however, Senators struck that provision, throwing those claims into a legally unsettled area. A new

By 1878, the subdivision of north Oakland was well underway. Page from the Thompson & West Atlas of Alameda County from the David Rumsey Collection.

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set of rules now governed this land, and another wave of displacement was about to begin.

California was admitted to the union in September of 1850. As people from all over were still streaming into the Golden State hoping to strike it rich one way or another, the Gold Rush soon produced a land rush. One of the first laws passed by the brand-new California State Legislature allowed squatters to claim up to 160 acres of unoccupied public lands by continuously occupying and cultivating it for a period, with the definitions of both "unoccupied" and "public" often stretched for the benefit of new arrivals.

In 1851, Congress created the Public Land Commission, charged with settling the Spanish and Mexican rancho titles left in the lurch by the amended 1848 Treaty. The grantees were required to present documentary proof of ownership, lest their lands pass automatically into the public domain in two years. Brothers Vicente and Domingo Peralta presented joint claim documents for their half of their father's ranch—the half that included the land where I now live—in January of 1852.

Not long after the Peralta brothers filed their documents, a wagon arrived on their land bearing George and Lucena Parsons. Tilling the soil on his northern Illinois farm, George learned of the far more lucrative harvest that could supposedly be found with ease in California dirt in late 1849. He developed a powerful case of gold fever. He ditched the farm and headed to Janesville, Wisconsin, where wagon trains were assembling for the journey west. There he met Lucena Pfuffer, the cousin of another member of his still-stationary traveling party. They married on 18 March 1850 and left the next day for California.

Lucena kept a diary for most of their journey, and from that diary we know how she and George wound their way to Utah, wintered in the Salt Lake Valley, and then in February of 1851 resumed their journey through Nevada and into California. By the time they made it to the source of George's fever dream of easy riches, the Gold Rush had

moved into a more established phase, one nearly impossible for newcomers to enter. They traveled on, eventually making their way to a spot on the eastern shore of the San Francisco Bay, about three miles north of the brand new town of Oakland, which was incorporated in 1852. It was here, on land they had no right to occupy, that they established a farm. They grew beans and onions. They grew peaches that won awards at the fair. They grew children.

All over the East Bay, farmers like the Parsons were squatting on Peralta land. Rustlers were stealing Peralta cattle and felling Peralta timber, all to feed the appetites of the growing boomtown across the bay. Even as they submitted their Public Land Commission claim, the Peraltas were watching their estate disappear bit by stolen bit. Political power at every level was shifting to the English-speaking newcomers, and Spanish-speaking Californios found themselves on the losing side of that change.

A much wealthier and better-connected group had been scheming for portions of the Rancho San Antonio well before the Parsons arrived. These men convinced Vicente and Domingo Peralta to begin selling their land, in part to pay their legal bills, even before the Public Land Commission made its ruling. By 1853, both brothers had sold the majority of their holdings to a group of squatter-investors that came to include San Francisco Sherriff John C. Hays, US Senator William Gwin (coincidentally, author of the law that created the Public Land Commission), and William Tecumseh Sherman, who managed a bank on our Pacific shore a decade before he marched across Georgia and burned Atlanta down.

After lengthy appeals, Vicente and Domingo Peralta's land claim wound up before the US Supreme Court in 1856. The Court ruled that they had rightfully owned all the land that they had already sold away. Through all the legal turmoil, George and Lucena Parsons had continued building a family and a farm on their parcel, now labeled Plot Number 40 on the official map of the Peralta lands. They failed as squatters, but they did well enough as farmers to purchase the full seventy-four acres from its post-Peralta owners in 1858 for $2,590.

Vicente and Domingo Peralta, meanwhile, had been left with only a few hundred of the roughly 9,400 acres their father had deeded each of them. Their cattle were stolen, their patrimony was lost, and the Californio ranch culture was fading rapidly. They were historic residents, but that counted for little in the new order.

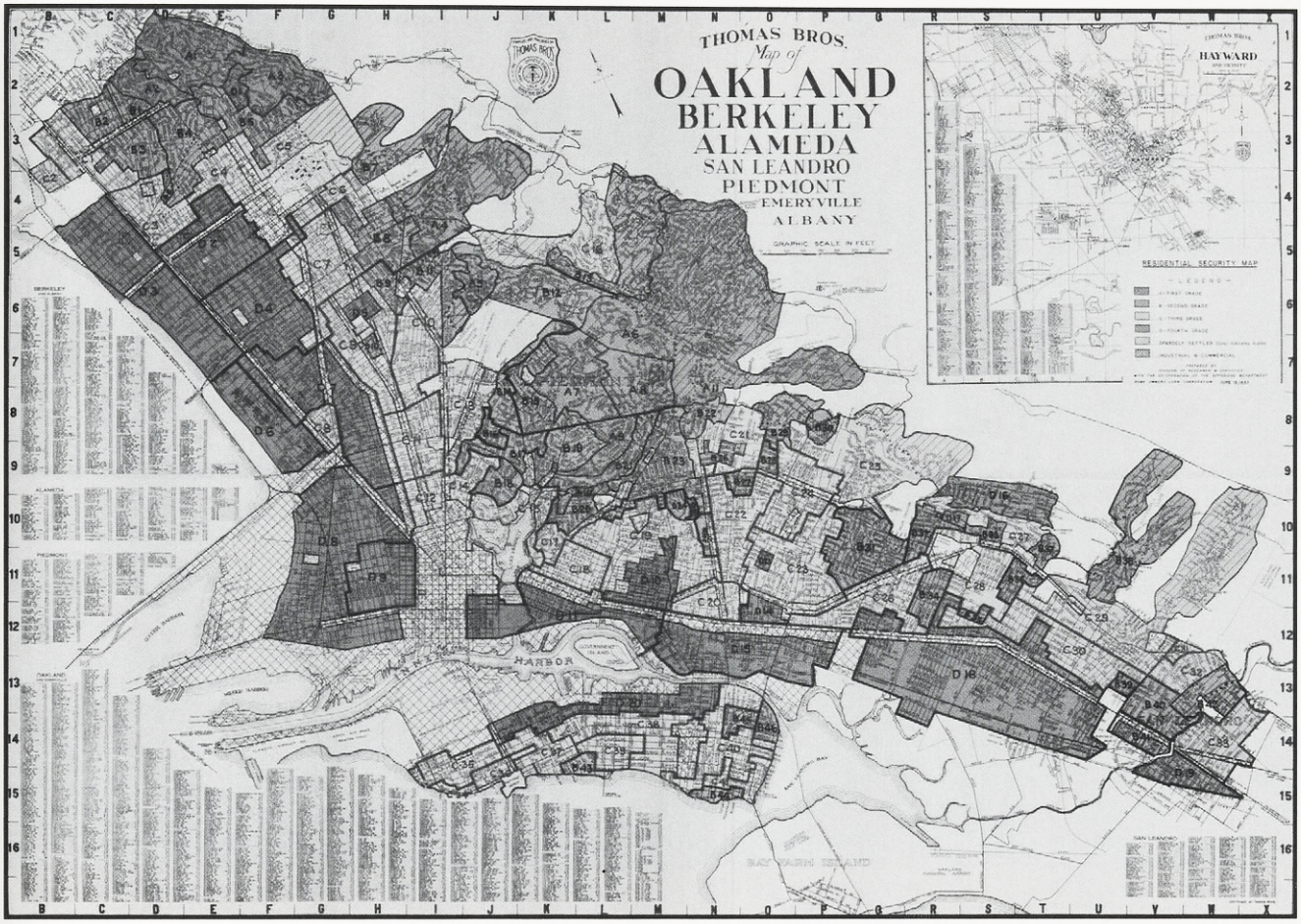
In the late 1860s, newspaper advertisements in this area shifted from offering prime farmland to touting tracts suitable for subdivision. As the growing city of Oakland spread northward and local transit lines sprang up, the Parsons began to cash in. In 1869, Oakland became the western terminus of the transcontinental railroad. The same year, George and Lucena sold a seventeen-acre portion of their farm—the land that now contains my house.

The new owner of this parcel was DeWitt Clinton Gaskill. He had made his fortune selling mining supplies in the northern gold fields. He bought the Parsons land while still living in Butte County, but did nothing with it for several years. When he finally relocated to Oakland in 1877, all around him people seemed to be making fortunes turning the productive farmland into housing parcels. He filed a subdivision map for his seventeen acres and sold most of his lots by the end of that year.

He did so just in the nick of time. The country was still reeling from the Panic of 1873 and the recession that followed. Unemployment in California was high and still rising. The primary cause of the boom around Gaskill's property was land speculation, not a genuine demand for new houses. The bubble popped and real estate values plummeted.

Over the next decade, the economy recovered, development accelerated, and houses began to replace the farms on the Gaskill tract and neighboring parcels. By 1890, the area wasn't yet fully developed, but the farmers were almost entirely gone. (George Parsons, the farmer who had owned my land before Gaskill, had died from a terribly metaphorical blow in August of 1882: he was thrown from his wagon against a car of the new railroad connecting a neighborhood station to the San Francisco ferry pier.) Once more, historic residents were giving way to new arrivals: middle- and working-class residents commuting by rail to downtown Oakland and via ferry to San Francisco. It would take an unexpected cataclysm, though, to finalize the neighborhood's transition to something resembling what it is today.

In July of 1905, railroad worker John Kavanagh and his wife Johanna bought a 50-by-91-foot lot in the Gaskill tract. A small house occupied the lot's western half. The previous owners had rented it to a succession of working-class tenants for the previous decade. John and Johanna moved into that house with their two teenaged sons, John, Jr. and Matthew. The neighborhood, which had been annexed into



Home Owners Loan Corporation map, 1937. COURTESY LADALE WINLING.

the city of Oakland in 1897, was still sparsely developed, with as many empty lots as houses on most blocks.

Less than a year later, on the morning of 18 April 1906, the Kavanaghs' investment received a tremendous boost when a 7.8-magnitude earthquake clapped just off the coast of San Francisco, shaking the city apart and setting much of it on fire. Oakland and the East Bay fared much better, and roughly 200,000 suddenly homeless San Franciscans fled on eastbound ferries. Three quarters of the refugees decided to stay. The aptly named but sparsely developed Golden Gate neighborhood would not remain that way for long.

In 1907, John Kavanagh built a new, larger house on the eastern half of his lot. A few years later, in 1911 or 1912, he tore down the old house and built a duplicate of the newer one in its place. His twin houses still stand today. The slightly younger twin is my home. John, Sr. would go on to build a third house next door. When John, Jr. married, he moved into one of the houses with his wife, Marie. They eventually had two sons of their own, William and John.

All around the Kavanaghs, lots were filling in. By 1925, the neighborhood had taken the form that it still holds: a streetcar suburb with a central commercial strip; relatively close transit connections to downtown Oakland and San Francisco; a mix of Victorian houses and early Craftsman bungalows, some apartment buildings, and, here and there, a reminder of a previous age in the form of a larger estate home or old farmhouse.

This is the neighborhood captured in the 1940 census files that my wife and I pored over in 2012. We found Marie Kavanagh (widowed by the 1936 death of John, Jr.) living in what is now our house with her sons, William and John, then in their twenties. The Kavanaghs were surrounded by people of mostly similar incomes, backgrounds, and race.

We found another description of the area in the same period prepared by the federally backed Home Owners'

Loan Corporation in 1937: "occasionally there are several blocks which are practically free of coloreds or Orientals, but . . . certain blocks . . . are nearly 100% Negro and constantly spreading." Based on that assessment, the section of Oakland including my neighborhood had been assigned the HOLC's worst loan risk grade, and on the corporation's maps, the area was colored red.

"Redlining," as it became known, meant that people in the area couldn't qualify for federally guaranteed loans, or pretty much any loans, to buy, build, or renovate a house. Redlining operated in concert with racially restrictive covenants that prohibited property owners from selling or leasing to certain groups, especially African Americans. As the Huchiun Ohlone and then the Peralta family had learned, the law does not serve everyone equally. It's usually not designed to.

By 1940, these mechanisms were already prompting those who could afford mobility—mostly whites—to move out of the area, but it was war that led most directly to my neighborhood's next major shift. World War II shoveled great heaps of federal money into defense industrial centers, including the Bay Area. Like the Gold Rush nearly a century before, the bonanza of jobs in shipyards and factories drew people here from all over the country, especially African Americans from the South. Redlining and other systems set up before the war meant that these black immigrants and those who came after them, through the 1950s and 1960s, were largely restricted to living in certain neighborhoods, such as the band sweeping north from West Oakland into South Berkeley, which includes my Golden Gate neighborhood.

In 1940, the census tract containing my neighborhood was 96 percent White. The HOLC area captured in that 1937 description was larger than the census tract, and included more African American residents south of where I now live. By 1950, the tract was 70 percent White and 28 percent "Negro." Over the next ten years, those numbers flipped: the 1960 census showed the tract as 69 percent Black and 28 percent White. By 1970, it was 85 percent Black and 12 percent White.

"Historic residents" like the Kavanaghs, who helped give this neighborhood its shape, fled. Marie was one of the last. She left in 1970. A few years later, the family sold her house—now my house—to Willie and Maud Turner, an African American couple. Willie had migrated here from the South, probably for a wartime manufacturing job, and he was working as a janitor. He and Maud had been renting in the neighborhood for several years before they bought this house.

This was the era of the historic residents that our neighborhood antigentrification activists refer to when they use that phrase. From there, it's a short hop to the present—and to the period of their displacement, which we are now in.

Maud Turner eventually sold the house to Charlotte Rose, whom everyone around here called Lottie. Lottie owned more than two dozen properties in the area through the 1990s and into the 2000s, operating a quiet rental empire, and earning the respect of her neighbors for her support for local organizations, the library, and neighborhood beautification. After Lottie died, and in the wake of our modern Great Recession and the real estate speculation that followed, her son David took the house off the rental market, renovated it, and sold it to my wife and me in 2011.

And there my research came full circle. I had found most of what I was looking for when I started this project. I had found many of the documents and the maps, the names and dates, and some of the personal and family stories that comprise the history of human habitation—at least for the last few centuries—of the place where I now live.

I found in that history the pattern that I expected. One group pushes out another group, often aided by forces much larger than themselves: a royal army, a Gold Rush, an earthquake, racism, the law, or the gears of capitalism turning. Those gears grind some people to dust. Others manage to harness their power to make fortunes large and small. Whether a person ends up as the machine's operator or its input is often not determined by anything resembling merit or even by individual decisions, however much we might like to pretend otherwise.

I could conclude that this is the way of all the earth. It's tempting, really, to see myself as simply a mote swept along in a wave of change. Displacement isn't my fault. I'm just a particle man, "doing the things a particle can." When I started this project, part of me was looking for that kind of absolution.

I didn't find it, and I realized eventually that I was foolish to have ever gone looking. Instead, I found a growing discomfort with the pattern of our history. I found a deeper connection with this place and with the people who had been here before. I found more empathy for

The author's house in Oakland's Golden Gate neighborhood.

those who had wound up on the losing side of the changes that have swept through this place time and again, including the changes happening now, of which I am a part, not just a particle.

And that, for me, is the rub—now.

I still think "historic residents" is the wrong way to talk about this very real problem. We can't and shouldn't pin a neighborhood or a city to a particular historical period. Even if the buildings stay in place, people don't. The sense of who constitutes the historic residents of a neighborhood can change in a few decades; an individual's name—George Parsons, Maud Turner, Brock Winstead—can disappear even faster.

I don't want to dismiss the possibility of righting the wrongs of the past. But when my neighborhood has a shouting match or, perhaps more productively, when we talk about housing and development policy in the city, the region, or the state, we're talking about addressing the problems of the present. Knowing that this cycle repeats through history doesn't absolve us from building cities that are inclusive and accessible to as many people as possible, not because they're "historic residents," but because they're people. Our responsibility is not just to the residents here now, who suffer when change displaces them, but also to those of the future, here and elsewhere.

It's likely too late for my neighborhood's historic residents. Barring a seismic or economic cataclysm, the gentrification of Golden Gate will continue until the neighborhood is remade. I walk out of my front door every day and push that process forward one more step. When the hammer comes down again—and we know it will—how do we protect those most likely to get squashed? Learning the history of this place did not lead me to an answer, but it taught me that we must find one, because the question will be posed again, here and all around us, as long as California continues to change. B

COMMENTS

COMMENTS

DELIVERY
SUMMER
OF 1943
OR THEREABOUTS

PHOTO PREVIOUS PAGE

Promotion for 'Love Our Neighborhood Day,' a one-day event closing part of San Pablo Avenue, 2014

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RvrsMtns MEMBER Aug 9, 2016

Bravo & Bravo!! More of this please. Historical, non-accusatory and meaningful. Well done.

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TopcliffeFeb 11, 2015

Its true owners? You mean the Native Americans whose land it's on?

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Stephen Spinetto Feb 11, 2015

My wife and I bought our house 37 years ago, in an all white, close in neighborhood of Boston that was mostly low income, we were among the early gentrifiers.Since then the neighborhood has become a high income area where single family houses sell for well over a million dollars.We do hear some negative comments from some of the original residents but most of them realize that the change has made many of them millionaires.The home owner rate was always high and those that left did well on the sale of their homes and moved to the burbs, and those that stayed are very glad they did, although can still resent the class differences.We are just reaching retirement age and still living in the 225 year old federal house we have renovated multiple times since we purchased it.We certainly have no guilt about gentrifying, in both our cases our parents or grandparents were pushed out of their homes by redlining or other urban renewal policies.

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davisFeb 11, 2015

"In 1940, the census tract containing my neighborhood was 96 percent white. The HOLC area captured in that 1937 description was larger than the census tract and included more black residents south of where I now live. By 1950, the tract was 70 percent white and 28 percent “Negro.” Over the next 10 years, those numbers flipped: The 1960 census showed the tract as 69 percent black and 28 percent white. By 1970, it was 85 percent black and 12 percent white."

This is what I've always said about the SJW howling about "gentrification" - the people they think are being "forced out" or what ever way they want to describe it, did the SAME THING to the people before them. Oakland, Bronx, DC, etc... doesn't matter, the people who are moving out did the same thing to the people who were living there 50/60 years ago

Get off your high horse

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Kate the Cursed Feb 21, 2015

Using SJW hurts your argument by making you look like a tool.

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davisFeb 21, 2015

@Kate the Cursed It's ok if you feel like that, you're clearly the type

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kansasboyMar 25, 2015

@davis I'm sorry but the black people did not do the same as what is being done to them today. the white people chose to move out of the area into the subs because the realtors and banks conspired to fund their movement. the feds and banks offered the incentivized loans and the realtors shipped in black people to hang out on street corners to scare off the white home owners; really, no joke. the black people moved into an area the whites left by choice; today, the blacks for the most part are moving not by choice, but by circumstances (rental eviction due to property foreclosed, consumption of bad equity loans leading to foreclosures, getting out of a difficult economic ladden situation...). there is a significant difference.

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davisMar 26, 2015

@kansasboy @davis It was called "block busting" and I'm fully aware of it. But in the end, your statement of "white people moving by choice" and then commenting about the banks conspiring to fund their movement and then the realtors bussing in blacks to "stand on the street corners" isn't really indicative of "choice". Nor is the fact that when the neighborhood changed and the crime rate spiked and the quality plummeted indicative of "choice" either. One moved out because they didn't want to get stabbed or mugged, the other moved out because they could no longer afford to live there. Neither is a "choice", but both led to the same result. Now that it's cycling again SJWs are getting all bent out of shape

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Joshua Shepherd Feb 11, 2015

This article is a gentrifier's history that hits of a vindication sought & found. Conversations on gentrification have reached fever pitch, and with its acceleration are reduced to hyperbolic shouts of frustration, but I suspect 'gentrification' is merely coded language for displacement + racism.

My grandmother was born in 1928 in a defunct tavern in the Lower Bottoms neighborhood of West Oakland to two poor Italian immigrants who were living in it. At that time the neighborhood was a thoroughly diverse melting pot at the end of the Transcontinental Railroad. As with many other families of European descent, they were able to assimilate into the American construction of 'whiteness', and move on. As we all know, this often wasn't an option for black folks.

Mr. Winstead did some really great research on the transformation of Ohlone lands into what we know as Oakland. What really grinds my gears is his tepid resignation to 'the cyclical nature' of things, and the total omission of Oakland's vast continuing history of struggle for racial justice.

Mr. Winstead wants to be a 'historical resident', too. His subtle derision of peoples' struggle to maintain their sense of place is salt in an infected wound. The airs of inevitability he blithely lays down mesh well with the inevitabilities of manifest destiny. But don't worry- he has done his research, and he feels badly. He's the latest of several generations who acknowledge racism exists and is 'bad', yet insist they are not that.

Go West, young man.

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MarcoMarsFeb 11, 2015
@Joshua Shepherd My grandparents came from Louisiana to escape segregation. They wanted to live in San Leandro but couldn't because they were African American.

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Kenny49 Feb 11, 2015
@MarcoMars @Joshua Shepherd Since your grandparents came to the bay area, something called the Civil Rights Bill passed that made what happened to them in San Leandro illegal. Today whites are only the largest minority in the city at about 38% followed by Asians at 31%. Blacks are 12% which is higher than the bay area average according to the 2010 census. Median household income is $65,000 compare to the bay area median of $71,000.

So San Leandro has become very integrated and racially diverse but still remains a very nice place to live. If there was any white flight from San Leandro, it only resulted in non-whites of the same income and class moving in and keeping the neighborhood the same.

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Question?Feb 11, 2015
@Joshua Shepherd Or you can avoid the scourge of gentrification. Detroit has completely rejected it. Their tax base is gone, the city services are non existent and the buildings are in disrepair if they are still habitable.

At some point protecting decay does not pay.

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kansasboyMar 25, 2015
@Joshua Shepherd Well enough said. I don't think the author is even aware of what you reference. I understand some, but not necessarily a first hand experience. thank you for sharing that.

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tungorFeb 10, 2015

My family was entrenched in the city, then they left as many did in the 20th century for the mistakes of suburbia, but now that we're sensibly returning from sprawl all that history is forgotten. We are intruders, newcomers. History didn't exist before the 1970s for us, either.

I guess I'm just burnt out on racists, whether they're black, white, brown, or whatever. Lots of black racists where I live. Kinda sad.

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tungorFeb 10, 2015
@Template Yeah, I've never seen a more angry culture than the Bay Area. The racial tension is toxic there. I saw random violence and rage in a way I've never seen elsewhere in the country.

Scary part of the country, the Bay Area is these days.

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RetiredinmaerimFeb 10, 2015
@tungor @Template Well said and true. I grew up in Oakland and when I was a kid in the late 1950s we dared not cross Telegraph avenue.

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Kenny49 Feb 10, 2015
@tungor @Template The toxic tension is really located in SF and the East Bay. You do not see it east of the Caldecott tunnel in cities such as Walnut Creek. You do not see it in Solano. You do not see it in Contra Costa. What little you see in Santa Clara/San Mateo is centered around East Palo Alto which is a pocket of poverty in an ocean of wealth. There is a little pocket of it around Marin City in Marin.

The key characteristic of the bay area places where there is NO angry racial tension is they are mainly middle class communities with little in the way of poor people. However SF and the East Bay have lots of poor people. They used to be non-whites but the Asians have done well and have either moved out or have become part of the gentrification crowd. The Hispanics are divided into native born citizens who have done well and recent immigrants who occupy the bottom of the economic ladder as all new immigrant groups have always done. In Santa Clara which has the second most expensive real estate in the bay area, most of the new home buyers are either Hispanic or Asians.

OTOH SF has many pockets of poverty such as the Western Addition, Tenderloin and Hunters Point. The South of Market (SOMA) used to home to the homeless but has been partially gentrified. The Mission is starting to gentrify and is a hot spot of anger. The Haight Ashbury was gentrified so long ago that its days of hippie love, crime and poverty is just nostalgia. Chinatown was and still is a pocket of poverty but the Chinese take care of their own with their family and regional protective societies.

The East Bay has the flats which extend from Berkeley south through Oakland which is one large area of poverty with a few pockets of prosperity such as Emeryville. That is where Winstead lives. Oakland is also historically a place where the police has acted more as an army of occupation for the black neighborhoods than a police force that serves and protect. That is reserved for the Oakland hills where the rich people live. In the East Bay, the elevation of your home is a good indication of your household income.

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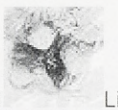

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davisFeb 11, 2015

@tungor @Template It's because progressives are good at telling OTHERS what to do, but when they have to live by their own rules they're even WORSE than they make others out to be.

You've seen this throughout history. During integration and busing the northern bastions of liberals were casting aspersions upon the racist south (for good reason), but when they were being forced to do the same thing, you saw them riot in places like Boston.

You're seeing the same thing here. It's all hypocrisy.

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kansasboyMar 25, 2015

@davis @tungor @Template very interesting comment. i think i understand. its like we can advocate intellectually points, but somehow justify our actions or worse, not even know we are coming from a place of entitlement and privilege as we speak. i too have some of that bs.

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davisMar 26, 2015

@kansasboy @davis @tungor @Template nice job channeling Jon Stewart with the snark, you are actually the type of person who'd get nervous if a black man moved in next to you

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Question?Feb 11, 2015

@Template It is not the house, it is the land underneath. The price of land, close in that spares you the 2 hour commute (one way) is going to be bid sky high. In areas like California with little or no public transportation rail or subway, the effect will only be magnified.

A bus system is not really a solution, since sitting on a bus for two hours is not an improvement.

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KachumFeb 10, 2015

should we call them settlers instead?

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MuckyDuckFeb 10, 2015

I don't think it does any good to negatively judge "gentrifiers." The people who move into a low-rent neighborhood are doing something a lot of consumers do; they're seeking a bargain, and they're doing it in a place that a lot of whites wouldn't touch. You wouldn't believe how many in the Duck extended family think we live in Murderville. It took months just to convince some of them to come for a visit. Of course their fears were unfounded.

This idea that there are young professional white hipsters scouting the horizon for black or Hispanic people to shove out of the way is just dumb. We were the only white family within a two- or three-block radius for a few years. It's not like we went around bragging about our coolness or something. We just wanted an affordable house that wasn't in the suburbs, and we found a steal, and we poured a lot of money and sweat into fixing this place up.

The tone of some of the people on this thread is ridiculous. The truth is some of them are probably gentrifiers, too, or benefactors of the chance other people took.

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tungorFeb 10, 2015
@MuckyDuck All I heard growing up was how horrible white people were for leaving the city and taking all the taxes and jobs with them. Now white people are horrible for coming to their senses and returning to the city where there's transit, central jobs, walkability, and community.

At some point, people just need to admit they're racist against white people and be done with it.

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MariaMFeb 10, 2015
@MuckyDuck My white friends just bought in outer Bayview. As a PoC I would never buy there. My comfort boundaries come to a screeching halt at Mission Bay condos for that part of the city. All they want is a large enough house for their family and their dogs with a garage for him, a backyard and a guest room that is under a million dollars. Such simple dreams really but it probably gets them judged as "gentrifiers"

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lindensillFeb 10, 2015
@MariaM @MuckyDuck Your white friends are very, very wise.

The Dogpatch is exploding and there's nowhere to move but Bayview, which, if you think about it, is a *fantastic* commute to South City/San Mateo...

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Оборванные Рука Feb 10, 2015
My house is ten steps (I exaggerate, but only slightly) from where the first humans walked into England. The land it sits on was a field that fell off into the North Sea and for eons was populated by a few fisherman who used it to gut herring and grow a bit of barley. After a millennia of fish with no chips, in the late 1800's the area was bought by an industrialist and

was quickly turned into a seaside resort. My house is part of the development of middle class Victorian terraces that popped up overnight. After WW2 the entire neighborhood got very sad and tired and by the time I bought my house it was one of the most depressed places in the UK. It's still tired, but it's looking up and it's slowly gentrifying.

I don't feel guilty a bit for rehabbing my house. I have absolutely no plans to turn the house back to a flophouse for alcoholics or turn the lot back into a field for herring fisherman or write a letter of apology to the Picts.

I can't think of anything more nonsensical than feeling guilty because you have bought a house that existed for a hundred years and that you have cleaned up and improved. It's the very definition of self-indulgent, liberal angst. It's as if the gripers who moan about their neighborhood changing would rather it fall apart given the option.

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Michigan Guy MEMBER Feb 10, 2015

@Raggedhand My house might turn into a flophouse for alcoholics after I retire. Fingers crossed...

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chc2001 Feb 10, 2015

Wow, Brock Winstead (what a wonderful gentrifier's name!), this is some of the best rationalizing I have ever seen! Did you acknowledge (cause I gave up on page two), that the reason the demographics changed in the 60s 70s is because black people moved into the neighborhood, and the lovely whites fled? Or are you too young to know that's what happened, and it likely isn't reported thusly in the newspapers?

Brock Winstead. Strong work, soldier.

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Nick_Adams Feb 10, 2015
@chc2001 I respectfully disagree with your judgment here. I really did not get any sense of "rationalizing" -- perhaps the author started with that goal in beginning his research but I didn't sense that that's where he ended up. I don't see your point in "acknowledging" "white flight"-- yeah so? The entire essay seemed to stress that change in demographics were often a result of racism- long before the 60's and 70's. Or are you too young to know that?

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Kenny49 Feb 10, 2015
@Nick_Adams @chc2001 I think Winstead was attempting to sooth his conscience by verifying the demographic changes that he is a part of, is a natural event that would happen without him. You do not have to be a history buff to know something of the demographic changes in the bay area over the centuries and decades.

I suspect Winstead would feel less guilty if he lived in the foothills of Oakland which is economically and racially mixed. There the gentrification family that moves in is as likely to be black, Hispanic or Asian as it is to be white.

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Kenny49 Feb 10, 2015
@chc2001 In California we have an example of white flight and one of black flight.

According to an investigation by the Bay Guardian, in the 1960's and 70's a small group of realtors conspired to send all their black clients to Richmond CA which was then an all white middle class city. Once they sold a house to a black family, they went back and told all the neighbors that a black family had moved in. Since this was the 1960's and 70's they had no problem finding a white family who wanted to move just because there was now a black family in the block. They would sell that home to another black family and repeat the process until the Iron Triangle was created. This is now a poor black crime ridden area of Richmond that made it one of the most crime ridden city in the San Francisco bay area.

In Los Angeles, the race riots in Watts of the 1960's and 70's created large blocks of empty lots as the blacks who lived and worked there never came back to rebuild. When the LA Times investigated what happened to all the blacks in the largest black community in the

West, they discovered that those blacks who could afford it, moved out to the white suburbs where they could live among their own kind, i.e. middle and upper class people and not have to worry about being burnt out by their fellow blacks. Today those old burnt out areas in Watts are vibrant Hispanic and Korean communities as those immigrant groups moved in and took over the empty blocks and rebuilt them. There is still a black Watts but it is much smaller and poorer than the Watts of the 1950's when it was a vibrant black community.

So in Richmond we had de-gentrification and in Watts we did not have gentrification so much as we had revitalization as many blacks just abandoned the area for better places.

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tungorFeb 10, 2015

@chc2001 You misread the article. The white flight followed by black flight is fundamental to his essay. I see no avoidance of that demographic shift. In fact, he charts the history before white flight took root in the 1970s.

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davisFeb 11, 2015

@chc2001 Blacks did it to the people before them, did you not read the history, or were you looking for a reason to ignore that so you can keep believing what you believe? And no, the neighborhood flipped because some people moved out, which brought blacks in, and then that increased the crime. Say what you will about the correlation, but you can't argue that the blacks didn't force the neighborhood to "gentrify" to PoC

What's good for the goose is good for the gander. Stop being hypocritical

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kansasboyMar 25, 2015

@chc2001 Bingo!

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perizadeFeb 10, 2015

My city used to be a very, very expensive place to live. A desire to move to the lovely suburbs and white flight certainly played a role, but more than anything it was the collapse of manufacturing. People left the city because they had to. There was simply no work. People who couldn't sell their houses rented them out to anyone who could pay anything, and up until recently a great portion of the city was still vacant. With the loss of manufacturing jobs and a decreasing population, infrastructure became strained and crime shot up, scaring away potential investors. Those who remained were taxed through the nose keep the city barely solvent, which it arguably currently isn't. This further deters investment because the risk that you will have an unprofitable white elephant that is heavily taxed is a near certainty. You will have nothing but abandoned buildings and high crime to show for it. The people who stay here suffer. So in truth, we would love a little gentrification, that could pay for infrastructure and attract investors that would improve the situation even more. Most of all, we would like well paid factory jobs. While some of us would have to move away, others COULD move away when we've been desperate to, and some of us could stay comfortably.

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IndyNCFeb 10, 2015

Got to love the drive of the real estate market, let's forget that the housing bubble pushed real estate prices well above where they should (and the resulting *burst* of said bubble was market forces creating a correction) as well as the sub-prime credit bubble which of course was what spurred on the housing bubble (you're living in a piggy bank, don't you want to spend that money?!? Don't worry about the Adjustable Rate Mortgage, Rates are at their historic LOWEST)

Yes this is going to happen time and time again... rise and fall of values, so long as someone stands to make a quick dime and can convince a bank to finance it all. Of course much of why there are activist is becuase this IS happening so quickly... Already a new generation of sheep are lined up for the slaughter and of course the people who didn't sink before will only find themselves sinking if they didn't get their house on a Fixed rate Mortgage.

All in all I find much of this to be "must be nice" category - then again I can't afford to live in a decent sized city in my area even though I make median income - places that are convenient enough to WALK to resturants and shopping are easily double what the average house in the 'burbs around here goes for.

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Оборванные Рука Feb 10, 2015

@IndyNC In the States the suburbs used to be where the inner city middle-class fled to, now they're fleeing back and the poor are taking their place. The rich ALWAYS have had the first choice of the best places to live. The poor have ALWAYS been pushed to live in where-ever the rich don't want anymore. The only thing that changes is what defines desirable and today it's the ability to walk to a nice restaurant and be close in to work. It used to be the ability to hop in your car and drive.

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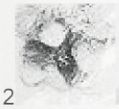
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Mischanova Feb 10, 2015

A friend of mine was born in Oakland in the late 50s. His uncle and his father both told me stories of living in East Oakland, which, they said, was predominately Okie transplants (which they counted themselves among) and Azorean Portuguese, who were mostly resettled from Hawaii.

They both told me they were among the last of the white flight to the suburbs in southern Alameda County in the early 60s. They left the beautiful Craftsman houses for stucco tract homes of what would become Fremont.
Nowadays, Oakland is being repopulated with a little of everyone, due to the affordability (and climate) compared to SF. My son is one of those working in SF and living in Oakland (near Lake Merritt). He loves it there.

Ironically, Fremont is now experiencing white flight, as its demographics have changed to Afghan, Indian and Asian. Fremont has become the Bay Area center for the H1V visa holders, it would seem.

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mpart Feb 10, 2015

I thought a recently Slate article just dispelled the myth of gentrification.

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AngelaNTyler Feb 10, 2015

I love this article for two reasons:

1. I grew up in Oakland, and I am always telling people that it is MUCH more than just the crime stats we see on the news each night. It has a rich, fascinating and varied history.

2. I used to be a 4th grade teacher, and I spent a lot of time and effort into researching California state history so that my students would have a true understanding of its diversity and history. If I were still teaching, my students would DEFINITELY be reading and discussing this article.

Well done!

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kansasboyMar 25, 2015
@AngelaNTyler nice. its an amazing place, yeah. its also the present history. the guy who sits on the corner every day; you know he is always there and says hi. its the lady who pulls the cart with a grumpy face. the black guy who has been here since birth who sells things. the building that once was the muslim bakery is losing its facade; it will be a body lotion shop someday. weren't the black panthers here too, still are though smaller and younger; i love it when they speak at crime scenes. the gal with the nice flowers who always calls me "baby" in passing. the place on lowell where the boys built skate ramps to play because there isn't anywhere else to go here. oh, and the multitude of vans and colorful RV lining streets; the people that occupy them. once one of them got stuck on our light pole and we invited the herd of people in for a drink; it was a mess but oh the story. i suppose i see where gentrification took SF in a decade I've been here and I grieve that loss too.

thanks for sharing.

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frampton MEMBER Feb 10, 2015
One historical point I didn't see in either the article or the comments: many of the surrounding cities didn't allow blacks to buy or rent. I grew up about 20 miles from Oakland, and as late as the late 60s, new housing tracts wouldn't sell to blacks, and San Leandro, right next to Oakland, had a total of four black families in 1970, all of them right by the Oakland border. Just one more data point that the author may or may not have considered.

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MischanovaFeb 10, 2015
@frampton You are very correct. I believe it took the Feds stepping in to get redlining in San Leandro stopped in the 70s.

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Ted M Feb 10, 2015
Here's what I don't get: the total lack of interest in why urban property values declined so precipitously between 1960 and 1990. Speculation and natural disaster had caused previous declines in land value. But it utterly unique in American history to have a built-up neighborhood decline in value in the absence of some catastrophe. Gentrification is more of a *return to the norm.* Land in a geographically desirable areas tends to appreciate. It's the decline, not the gentrification, which requires explanation.

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makqFeb 10, 2015
@Ted M

Racism, its ebb and flow.

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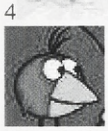
Ted M Feb 10, 2015
@makq @Ted M Racism? Seriously? I also suppose it's responsible for global warming and sunspots.

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icemilkcoffeeFeb 10, 2015

@Ted M @makq Are you saying racism doesn't exist? Or that white flight wasn't a factor in the urban property value decline?

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hank10303 Feb 10, 2015
@Ted M @makq -- Ever heard the term White Flight, look it up.

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drosswilkFeb 10, 2015
@Hank Scott **@Ted M @makq** So as the story relates here, this current "problem" is the result of blacks who moved to the suburbs selling their parents home, "black flight".

Basically, in these neighborhoods in Oakland, for decades, the black middle class has been leaving and they would rather cash out then stay there.

I am curious how this is viewed through the "racism" lens.

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IndyNCFeb 10, 2015
@Ted M @makq I'd argue it's more Corporate greed than anything.

People who have homes of marginal values (especially if they are unable to maintain them) are slowly forced out by Greedy developers who'd rather demolish "the 'hood" in favor of chic row houses with niche shops and cafe's under and around them. They don't really CARE about who's being forced out so much as they care about the money.

And let's face it, classism kicks in here - because to the bank a po' white boy is only marginally better than a po' black boy or a po' chinese boy or a po' latino...

So the neighborhoods are emptied of the "undesirable", mostly poor to lower middle class, particularly the elderly and filled with young up and comers who can afford the "new" price tag... now pumped up with "convenient" extras and HOA fees etc.

At the end of the day... the developer doesn't care if the person who's neighborhood he's looking to flip is Black, because he simply doesn't care. I know it's "trendy" now to try to make it look like it's this or that... but let's be really honest here and say it... It's about the haves and the have nots. I won't deny most the haves are white... but I am one of the have nots (who happens to be white) and I can tell you, just being white ain't enough, it's where you came from, what school you went to and how much money mommy and daddy had to ensure your membership into the "club".

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MischanovaFeb 10, 2015

@IndyNC In the case of Oakland, people want the existing homes. Many of them are nice old Craftsman style homes dating to before the Great Depression, many built with old-growth redwood. Few are being knocked down. the owners are fixing up the neglected old ladies, putting nice paint jobs on them and living there.

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Question?Feb 11, 2015

@drosswilk @Hank Scott **@Ted M @makq** It is viewed by liberals as "you working tax payers have to put up with what every we tell you to put up with. "We the liberals have decided that crime is your fault and is is immoral of you (black or white) to want to live in a low crime area. We the liberals have decided it is immoral of you to want a good school for your child (black or white) and you should keep your child in the low performing school with the gang banger kids targeting your kid to join the gang or suffer daily beatings. We the liberals will be behind the gates of or lilly white mcmansion community in Pacific Heights if you have any questions. And BTW my little Muffy attends an all white school because of the grades"

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Question?Feb 11, 2015

@IndyNC Developers are in it for the money, but they are the 3rd wave in. The first wave is usually poor hipsters, artists, students, etc who simply cannot afford anything else. The second wave is your Boho professionals and once they have established a sufficient critical mass, then the developers move in. But if the poor (who once upon a time, were able to buy housing at a bargain prices because the neighborhood was deteriorating) make a lot of money when the developers move in, no harm no foul. Renters get pushed out.
Like it nor not, re-gentrification and change are vital parts of the city and its economy. Cities that have not regentrified, Gary, IN; Benton Harbor, MI; Detroit MI: These are not places you want to live. The government is so invested in Victim Politics, that every business and eventually everyone who simply wanted regular garbage pick up, left.

I live in Chicago. We have had a lot of white flight and gentrification.

I do hear nostalgia for the middle class version of the old neighborhood, but I rarely hear, darn, I miss that ghetto.

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Ted M Feb 11, 2015

@icemilkcoffee @Ted M @makq So "white flight" is the same thing as racism? Who knew?

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Ted M Feb 11, 2015

@Hank Scott **@Ted M @makq** Stupid. As if it's synonymous with racism or responsible for this.

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Ted M Feb 11, 2015

@Question? @IndyNC Um, no. By my count, the hipsters are the 14th wave, Boho 15th, and developers 16th.

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LikeReply

squirtFeb 10, 2015

@Ted M In Oakland, and also around the greater Bay Area, the large working class and minority populations moved in because of the good jobs in shipbuilding, shipping and manufacturing because of the war. Many soldiers and sailors who had been stationed in the Bay Area stayed after the war and went to work here.

In the late 60's, shipbuilding and shipping started to decline. (Trivia: shipbuilding was such a big industry here that it is specified that the starship Enterprise is to be built at Hunter's Point.) Military bases started to close. The huge GM plant in Fremont closed. Agricultural jobs were displaced as land was sold for housing, much more profitable, and encouraged by the cities.

Black and white and Hispanic workers were all affected as their jobs disappeared. New jobs in that sector have not appeared, being replaced by lower wage office work and retail work and service jobs.

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Ted M Feb 10, 2015

@squirt @Ted M But the phenomenon occurred in every major American city, not just Oakland.

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hank10303 Feb 10, 2015

@Ted M @squirt Brown v. Board of Ed applied to every city.

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BASFeb 10, 2015

@Ted M I'm fairly sure that the movement of blacks and other racial minorities into the inner cities is the reason. White people tend to be racist and not want to buy in "black" neighborhoods, so if you limit the number of people interested in buying there to 10-15% of the population, that does pretty serious damage to property values.

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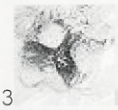

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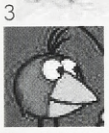

Ted M Feb 10, 2015

@BAS @Ted M I'm not buying it. Racism is responsible for a lot of things, but not the decline in urban land values from 1960-1990.

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dimeadozenFeb 10, 2015

@Ted M @BAS I think racism plays a part, but I think a lot of it had to do with massive building up of American suburbs after WWII, as well as increased affluence that allowed most of the population to own cars and to have more freedom of movement.

People fled the cities for more room, fresh air, bigger houses, quiet, etc. Why live in a cramped apartment if being able to walk to work, or take public transit, suddenly wasn't such a necessity? The folks who couldn't do that (for economic reasons, racism, etc.) stayed in the urban areas, which began a natural decline as a large portion of the workers

left and businesses and industries began to die off, move out to cheaper land in the suburbs, etc.

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JoeMcCloyFeb 10, 2015
@dimeadozen @Ted M @BAS In Philadelphia, Boston and the outer boroughs of NYC only some neighborhoods turned into slums with de-industrialization and suburbanization. There were/are working-class neighborhoods that kept their community and kept their real estate values.

Sadly, it seems that the major differences between the functional neighborhoods and dysfunctional ones is the ethnic/cultural heritage of the people living there and the differences between working-class and "under-class."

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MischanovaFeb 10, 2015
@Ted M @BAS Ted, you would be wrong. White Flight was a very real thing in Oakland, Richmond and Emeryville in the 50s. As they began to build in neighboring Contra Costa county and in southern Alameda, whites bailed out en masse, abandoning their old neighborhoods to black families.

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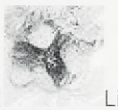
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hank10303 Feb 10, 2015
@Ted M You can't be that naive can you. The civil rights movement culminated in 1965 with the passing of civil rights laws. Those laws allowed and the Federal government mandated integration. From 1965 and the civil rights laws to the Brown v. Board of Ed decision White American left the urban centers for the suburbs and less integrated communities. Thus, the decline in property values. It is also known as "White Flight".

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drosswilkFeb 10, 2015
@Hank Scott **@Ted M** Detroit's population started to shrink in 1950.

1950 also saw Oakland population shrinking. And Philadelphia.

Perhaps increases in crime as a result of post-war unemployment.

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Оборванные Рука Feb 10, 2015

@Ted M It follows the rise and decline of factory jobs in conjunction with the rice of the automobile. Once people became less and less tied to living in a certain neighborhood so that they could walk to work, they had a choice about where to live and that has created the ebb and flow of neighborhoods.

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tungorFeb 10, 2015

@Ted M Government invested in the highway / suburban infrastructure and then supplemented people to move out to them. The automobile became affordable and people thought in the 1960s-90s that getting in a big hunk of steel was the future / best way to live.

It devastated our cities, our communities, our farms, our forests and hunting lands, so a new generation is fixing that mistake and returning to cities and walkable towns.

The age of sprawl came and went with the 20th century.

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Hank ScottFeb 10, 2015

I don't think gentrification would be an accurate term for this scenario. First CA land was negotiated to end a war. As a result the families settling after ward weren't moving anyone out that had a valid claim because of the collateral damages of war. Second, gentrification, as used by minorities, usually applies to communities that once thrived with its minority population.

For example, most Americans, even New Yorker's don't know that lower Manhattan, currently Wall Street once was inhabited by half of New York's Black population during segregation. Because Black Americans couldn't get the same services from insurance to shopping as the White population they created their own businesses to service the Black community. Be it envy, spite or just plain on racism a prosperous Black community wasn't look on very favorably so White land owners began buying up property by force, fear and intimidation. Once again, the businesses that took their place refused to service the Black community so it was no longer viable for those that wanted to stay. The migration made its way to what is today Harlem. But, the gentrification not only displaced the generational inhabitants; it out priced the land so that no minority could think of buying it; if they could.

In the sections of the article that refer to coffee shops or getting a beer close to home; the lives of Blacks in the process of being displaced saw all those things taken away one by one to where it became unreasonable to stay. The burial grounds they used to put their dead to rest was covered up and constructed over.

Burial Ground Bears Witness to a Segregated City
- **http://www.gothamgazette.com/index.php/development/3690-burial-ground-bears-witness-to-a-segregated-city**

Now, in today's reality gentrification means the services minority communities have been trying to get for generations finally come. Police to some degree stop being overseers 100% of the time; financial institutions no longer "black list" the community and will loan funds; schools start to get attention.
This alone is enough to rattle any parents nerves; that in order to get what your taxes pay for you need White neighbors.

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Ted M MEMBER Feb 10, 2015
@Hank Scott When the author talks about the illogic of "stopping the clock" at any point in time ("that's the moment when no one had taken land") he's talking about you.

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Hank Scott Feb 10, 2015
@Ted M @Hank Scott -- So when minorities "stop the clock" as you say it is a negative. But, the clock has been stopped for Jews for far longer yet you aren't condescending to their stoppage. Even today if a former Nazi is found alive he can be tried for his crimes. Of the generations of Black Americans that have been murdered, robbed and abused time moved on over looking any wrong doing done to them. All the while the offspring of the slaver have prospered.

Ever heard the term "old money". Where do you think the labor came from to produce that "old money". It certainly wasn't from paying White Americans a fair wage and surely you know Black Americans weren't paid a fair wage, not even those that built the White House. Were you even aware a Black man invented the cell phone - Henry T. Sampson.

Don't get me wrong, you aren't to blame because just as the powers that be have manipulated the written history to smooth over the abused committed to Black Americans they have also misinformed White America in to believing that nearly everything of value is

the product of a White man's mind. From the first refrigerator to the the first heart surgery it was a human being in Black skin that made a significant number of the inventions that made America great. And White America did its best to bury those facts in the sands of time. You are just as much a victim because you believe more about who you are as a people than there is substance.

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Ted M MEMBER Feb 11, 2015

@Hank Scott **@Ted M** What a weird post.

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Chris Taylor Feb 10, 2015

this is quite a bit of work to assuage white guilt

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dimeadozen Feb 10, 2015

@Chris Taylor I don't know that white people of modest means feel very guilty about buying where they can afford to buy. And why should they? On a macro level gentrification is a negative thing for the residents who already live there and will soon be priced out, but on a micro level, at least in the beginning, it's people trying to find a place to live that they can afford.

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Stereo Left Feb 10, 2015

Gentrification is liberation - the vanquishing of indolent down-and-outers and their associates in the tagging, littering and food-stamp-cashing trades. The eradication of poverty is a good thing.

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ralph_w Feb 10, 2015

@Stereo Left How goes your troll harvest t'day?

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nuzzybearFeb 10, 2015

@Stereo Left 8/10 on form, but could have used more race, feminist and vegan-baiting.

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life observer Feb 10, 2015

@nuzzybear @Stereo Left How do you bait a vegan? With something unappetizing no doubt.,

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MichaelFeb 10, 2015

This is close to home. My grandparents moved to Oakland in the early 1940's to work in the shipyards. They bought a tiny house and then built the house behind it on weekends and after work. By 1970 the neighborhood had deteriorated, the crime was increasing, and two elderly white people might as well as had a target on their backs. We moved them out and the house was sold to a black family. Apparently they were able to get a loan. So if I decided to buy and restore their old house I'd be a gentrifier?

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Ted M MEMBER Feb 10, 2015

@Michael The author admits that gentrification is not a useful term. But yes, you would be a gentrifier.

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John Marshall Alexander Jr. Feb 10, 2015

I think this is a well-written and interesting article.

But I'm still not clear on how "gentrification" forces people from their homes.

First, apartment rents in Oakland cannot increase more than once a year and cannot increase by more than about 2% a year (it was 2.1% for 2014). So if you are renting an apartment in a gentrifying area, your rent will only increase very slowly, even if the market rate for the neighborhood increases rapidly.

Second, if you own a home in California, property taxes can't go up more than an average of 2% a year. So, again, if you own a home in a gentrifying area, your property taxes will only increase very slowly, even if the market value of your home goes up rapidly.

Third, there is essentially no estate tax in California, so if you inherit property that has gone up in value, the worst thing that happens is that you also have to pay property tax on the actual assessed value -- but after the first year, the Prop13 caps apply to you, too.

Fourth, on average, most renters in the US stay in the same apartment for less than two years. Thus, even most of those renting single-family homes (and thus not covered by the rent control caps) are not significantly affected, since statistically, most of those renters will only renew their leases once or twice before moving. (Oh, and the most recent analysis of renters in "gentrifying" neighborhoods found that they are actually more likely to stay if the neighborhood gentrifies -- most people are willing to pay a premium to remain in a good neighborhood.)

Fifth, the WORST thing that happens if you own property in a gentrifying neighborhood is that you sell it for a big profit and go live somewhere else.

"Gentrification" is far worse for commercial property tenants than for residents. Residents are generally unaffected (to the extent they do not profit handsomely) from rapidly increasing property values. They are cushioned, by law, from the potential harmful consequences such as higher rents and property taxes. Commercial tenants have to bear the brunt of increased property values. The little bodega on the corner gets kicked out and replaced by a Starbucks. Indeed, eventually the hipster knitting store will also get priced out, replaced by a PetSmart or an REI.

If you're going to complain about gentrification, complain about how the grimy liquor store with the plexiglass shield over the counter has been replaced by a tapas lounge. The residents aren't the ones who suffer, it's the small businesses who get evicted that have problems.

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Andrew Feb 10, 2015

@John Marshall Alexander Jr. I gathered from the article that many, if not most, of the houses in that neighborhood were rental units. If rent increases are capped, it makes perfect financial sense for the landlords to sell out to owner-occupiers when property values start to increase at any rate greater than 2%. Thus the displacement of tenants in favor of homeowners.

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John Marshall Alexander Jr. Feb 10, 2015

@Andrew @John Marshall Alexander Jr. And this is a bad thing because -- ? You don't have a "right" to live in someone else's house. The most you have is a lease . . . which, by design, expires, usually once a year.

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icemilkcoffee Feb 10, 2015

@John Marshall Alexander Jr. @Andrew He is refuting your allegation that no poor residents are pushed out.

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dimeadozen Feb 10, 2015

@John Marshall Alexander Jr. What about the folks who get boxed out of renting because their buildings turn into co-ops or condos, or the apartments they rent in duplexes or other structures are turned into (or back into) single family homes. When prices begin to soar, renting loses its value and owners ditch renters as fast as they can.

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John Marshall Alexander Jr. Feb 10, 2015

@dimeadozen @John Marshall Alexander Jr. In part, "renting loses its value" because of rent control laws -- an unintended consequence but a very real one.

Since renters by definition have no right to a particular residence beyond what is described in the lease, I don't see what the problem is.

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Ted M MEMBER Feb 10, 2015

@John Marshall Alexander Jr. He's talking about how gentrification affects renters. But I agree that it's a stupid term.

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icemilkcoffeeFeb 10, 2015

@John Marshall Alexander Jr. "on average, most renters in the US stay in the same apartment for less than two years"

When you move, you lose the protection of rent control. Oakland rent control is not like the old style Berkeley Rent control where the rent is controlled even when tenants come and go. In San Francisco and Oakland, when an old tenant leaves, you are free to raise the rent to whatever for the new tenants coming in.

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icemilkcoffeeFeb 10, 2015

I think it's becoming increasingly clear to people that gentrification is not the problem. Middle class people moving into a neighborhood is a good and wonderful thing. The bad thing is rich people keeping a pied-à-terre in places like San Francisco, Vail and Manhattan. That is what unnecessarily drives up property prices beyond the reach of people who actually work in these places. And that's not just rich white people- that's rich Chinese and rich Russians and everyone else.

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FlabJabFeb 10, 2015

@icemilkcoffee I live in Manhattan and I'm torn on that issue. Those billionaires who buy a $30 million apartment on West 57th Street aren't in the same housing market as I am, even if we live close by, and they pay taxes while using hardly any public services.

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Bill A. Feb 10, 2015

@FlabJab @icemilkcoffee

Two city planners were on the radio yesterday, one from Oakland and another from San Francisco.

San Francisco has 2x as many residents as Oakland, but 8x the budget. Oakland's city budget is $1 billion, and San Francisco's is $8 billion. Both have roughly the same land area.

That kinda blew my mind, and drove home the importance of property taxes. If you want city services--which the poor and working class benefit from the most--you need richer people paying property taxes.

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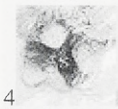

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John Marshall Alexander Jr. Feb 10, 2015

@icemilkcoffee I de-gentrified my neighborhood. The prior owner of my home, an elderly widow, had the poor timing to die just as the housing market burst. I bought the place for about 1/3 less than my neighbors paid for their houses, and am the poorest homeowner on my block.

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life observer Feb 10, 2015

@John Marshall Alexander Jr. @icemilkcoffee That's what my wife always told me to do. Buy the cheapest house on the block. The path to economic success.

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halupkyFeb 10, 2015
Ha ha me too timing is everything

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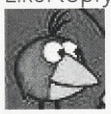

Ted M MEMBER Feb 10, 2015
@icemilkcoffee So you think pied-a-terres are immoral? Those billionaires pay property taxes and employ maid and butlers. You want to throw people out of work?

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ralph_w Feb 10, 2015
@Ted M @icemilkcoffee There's the solution to our economic woes: Downton Abbey. And lots of em.

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2 LikeReply

icemilkcoffeeFeb 10, 2015
@Ted M @icemilkcoffee Too bad those maids and butlers have to commute for an hour and a half just to get to their place of work.

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FlabJabFeb 10, 2015
"Gentrification" is just white people looking for a place to live. Not all white people can afford to live where they want to so sometimes they're forced to find areas along the periphery. They don't really want to live in this neighborhood or in Bed-Stuy in Brooklyn or wherever -- it's just where their economic situation forces them to go to be in the vicinity of SF or NYC or where they want to be. There's no law against it and there's no conspiracy or nefarious intent.

Long-time residents of my neighborhood tell me it used to be filled with drug dealers and street crime. Now it's not and they're happy for it. So thank you gentrifiers.

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5 Like Reply

Chris Baker Feb 10, 2015

@FlabJab and some people want a house that's -les-s than they can afford, with some character, closer to work, rather than some cookie-cutter new house far away. When I bought my house, i considered something closer to my work, at a price that I could afford even if I got laid off for a few months, and something that I could renovate using all the skills I learned from watching decades of "This Old House".

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Matthew Baur Feb 10, 2015

"Take care of it Norm"?

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FlabJab Feb 10, 2015

@Chris Baker @FlabJab Like I said, people want to near where they want to be. So basically location, location, location.

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Andrew Feb 10, 2015

@FlabJab I remember one of the earliest articles on gentrifying was yuppies moving into a neighborhood controlled by Hell's Angels. They used violence to drive off the homeless and discourages other gangs from encroaching, but kept their illicit activities behind closed doors and were polite to the yuppies.

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FlabJab Feb 10, 2015

@Andrew @FlabJab You can see that on East 3rd street I believe in Manhattan right now. Hells Angels HQ has been there for decades.

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RickFeb 10, 2015

Myself and my two sisters inherited a house in the Inglewood area of Calgary. The house is 104 years old and my family has been there since 1923 but I have been interested in who built it as it is a little grander than its adjacent neighbours. I was told that it was the first house in the area. We took over the house when it was a complete mess with the intention of fixing it up to provide income for our aunt however the fixing up really led to a complete rebuild. The house still had the original furnace, an octopus as they were named. What was interesting was we uncovered the original electrical inspection certificate from the City of Calgary as well as a board that had written on it - plumber Sault Ste Marie, Michigan July 10, 1910. We were able to find a board with the name of the plumber. What was a fix up ended up a total rebuild.

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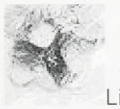

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halupkyFeb 10, 2015

Man San Francisco and the Bay Area must be a truly wonderful place to live to offset the amount of shIt heads you have to put up with there. It's really impressive

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lindensillFeb 10, 2015

@halupky The weather.

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halupkyFeb 10, 2015

Must be awsome

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lindensillFeb 10, 2015

@halupky 65 and sunny in February!

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BASFeb 10, 2015

@lindensill @halupky Appealing in Feb, but it's depressing in July when it's still 60 degrees. To me anyway. But yes, I suspect that's a huge part of it.

Plus, you know, jobs. I'm not a huge fan of where I live now but I like my job and it's here.

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halupkyFeb 10, 2015

I hear you jobs are pretty big driver in the decision process but I don't think I could take living next to this guy or somebody like him.

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FungusFeb 10, 2015

The fans have become accepting of "Rebuild" years. The only place performance actually matters is in the business world.

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Srsly Dad Y Feb 10, 2015

TL;DR. Can somebody catch me up? Did this article have a point? Let me guess, ye shall have teh gentrifiers always with you?

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ralph_w Feb 10, 2015

@Srsly Dad Y

1. Setup strawman

2. Looooong description of historical account to research strawman.

3. Knock down strawman

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Srsly Dad Y Feb 10, 2015
@ralph_w @Srsly Dad Y TY

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makqFeb 10, 2015
@Srsly Dad Y

I am a liberal, but the winey blacks are annoying, so I went on a journey through time to call them hypocrites.

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ralph_w Feb 10, 2015
@makq @Srsly Dad Y I personally prefer the beery blacks over the winey blacks. They're just less pretentious.

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makqFeb 10, 2015
@ralph_w @makq @Srsly Dad Y

I thought this article was about gentrification!

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AndrewFeb 10, 2015
@ralph_w @makq @Srsly Dad Y I was going to quip that the winey blacks, with their paper bags full of Mad-Dog really drive down property values.

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life observer Feb 10, 2015
@Andrew @ralph_w @makq @Srsly Dad Y I gave up on MD20 when they lowered the alcohol content.

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Srsly Dad Y Feb 10, 2015
@makq @Srsly Dad Y TY

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ralph_w Feb 10, 2015
I found this article really grating and either obliviously naïve or disingenuous. Did he truly believe at any point that he was going to uncover the "true historic owners?" As if he was going to stand up at a townhall meeting, raise a finger and say to the angry resident being pushed out "well, actually, I researched the history, and I found that . . . "

(yes, in my scenario, his voice is really nasal)

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makqFeb 10, 2015
@ralph_w

I would have loved to see that video tape.

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nuzzybearFeb 10, 2015

@ralph_w He probably would be doing that in an online forum - like where he found people like him being villified. This article was made for online forum citation, much like Ralph Wiggum.

"My cat's breath smells like cat food!"

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John Marshall Alexander Jr. Feb 10, 2015

@nuzzybear @ralph_w "Sometimes the elves tell me to burn things!"

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J P McMahon MEMBER Feb 10, 2015

@ralph_w He *did* find all of that information, all the way back to the builder. And no one was "pushed out" of the house so he could live there. When the previous owner found that Winstead's check had cleared the bank, I'm sure he was overjoyed.

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ralph_w Feb 10, 2015

@J P McMahon @ralph_w In which case the entire historical discussion is irrelevant. At least irrelevant to the clicky headline.

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J P McMahon MEMBER Feb 10, 2015

@ralph_w @J P McMahon The historical discussion is relevant since it shows that the property has been in a state of flux since the beginning of recorded history there. No one has more right to it than anyone else, unless they are holding the paper on the place.

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2 LikeReply

ralph_w Feb 10, 2015

@J P McMahon @ralph_w To focus on one particular building is also a very simplistic, narrow view of gentrification. Also, there would be no need to go back hundreds of years for some inexplicable purpose.

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Matthew Baur Feb 10, 2015

You're just built too low, the fast ones go over your head.

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lindensillFeb 10, 2015

Nothing's more hilarious than watching millennials scramble to justify their gentrifying the far reaches of Oakland.

Guess who I displaced to move into in my neighborhood? Another upper middle class white person.

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nuzzybearFeb 10, 2015

@lindensill It does go along with the Bay area theme of "making the world a better place!"

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J P McMahon MEMBER Feb 10, 2015

@lindensill The author didn't "displace" anybody since the house had been gutted and renovated by the previous owner, whose mother had been a landlord who had rented the place out. Leaving a dilapidated rental on the market was better for the neighborhood than fixing it up and selling it to a family to live in? This story sounds like everybody won.

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lindensillFeb 10, 2015

@J P McMahon @lindensill I don't even think it's a big deal, you can't really fight gentrification, but it's just hilarious to watch the pious try to rationalize their cognitive dissonance away.

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halupkyFeb 10, 2015

Easy for you to say you don't have to live next to a guy named "Brock".

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FlabJabFeb 10, 2015

@lindensill There's no justification necessary. Why even bother.

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AndrewFeb 10, 2015

@lindensill The prior occupant of my house died literally the day of or day after our closing. It was like buying Christine. Of course, he had been adjudged incompetent and forcibly relocated to a nursing home quite some time earlier, but the synchronicity was eerie.

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thisaftFeb 10, 2015
@lindensill Are you suggesting that whites only buy homes in white neighborhoods? Leaving blacks in only black neighborhoods? Perhaps we should be desirous of school segregation this way as well. And I'm assuming it would be preferable if whites and blacks also had separate public restrooms? I mean they would be equal and everything, but it's really the only way to make sure that whites only displace whites.

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Michigan Guy MEMBER Feb 10, 2015
@lindensill You monster!

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JohnChiFeb 10, 2015
I gotta laugh at all the twisting people do to remove their guilt. If you are worried about displacing people and that bothers you, don't move there. If you want to live in a neighborhood and you can afford it, go for it. Stop trying to have everything both ways.

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makqFeb 10, 2015
@JohnChi

The only one that should have any guilt in these cases is the former landlord.

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AndrewFeb 10, 2015
@makq @JohnChi Last I checked landlords weren't in it for the charity, and as long as they weren't breaking anyone's lease, why should they feel guilty?

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Revenge of the Alex Smith Feb 10, 2015
@JohnChi Unless he's St. Francis himself I doubt he feels a lot of guilt-I don't think he need feel any.

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Matt1234 Feb 10, 2015
It would seem a part of this is owning vs renting.

My grandfathers were working men. Both built houses on lakes where they would not be able to afford the property today. Both now have small homes surrounded by McMansions. They can still pay the taxes so no one is forcing them out.

When you rent you are at the mercy of others.

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BASFeb 10, 2015
@Matt1234 True. If the "historic residents" (the mostly black people from the 70s - 00s) had been homeowners, I doubt there'd be as much concern. They might choose to sell and move away, but they'd be well-compensated since the housing prices have risen so much.

But what's probably happening is that mostly white non-resident landlords are the ones cashing in.

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Kate the Cursed Feb 10, 2015
Silly black folks, not thinking to invest in real estate...

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J P McMahon MEMBER Feb 10, 2015
@BAS @Matt1234 In *this* case, the landlords were black. Lottie Rose owned more than two dozen rentals. Is she the bad person here because she didn't give the houses away so that her family couldn't sell them after her death? You're jumping to a conclusion based on no evidence, at least from this story.

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Kate the Cursed Feb 10, 2015
Go Lottie. She managed to squeak in as redlining started to come apart.

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BASFeb 10, 2015
@J P McMahon @BAS @Matt1234 In THIS case they were black. The presumption generally in situations about gentrification is that most of the residents are black renters, and that the landlords are white.

I don't think anyone's a "bad person". I can recognize why some people are upset, but I also think they need to recognize that they don't own the neighborhood.

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FlabJabFeb 10, 2015
@Matt1234 And if you own, gentrification drives up your property value.

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Penny Century MEMBER Feb 10, 2015
I want the house in the last picture. Any chance I could have it moved to Stumptown?

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GOP_Refugee Feb 10, 2015
Hipster Gentrifier?

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nomoreno MEMBER Feb 10, 2015

This house is within a stone's throw of Pixar, and minutes from Twitter, LinkedIn, SalesForce.com, and other booming tech companies in SF from the BART stop. I find it hard to believe these buyers just got lucky: its a prime location that was bound to gentrify, and city leaders and developers have been eyeing it for a few decades.

Gentrification brings up the price of houses, greatly benefitting existing homeowners who can sell for a bundle of money, or rent out rooms for a lot more. Rent control keeps renters in a good spot in a neighborhood with more amenities.

So I'm not sure who exactly is complaining here and why.

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nuzzybearFeb 10, 2015
@nomoreno People who complain: older residents on fixed incomes that cannot afford to continue living in the houses they hoped to live the rest of their lives in - because the taxes have gone up so much, people who grew up in the neighborhood who cannot afford to get a house of their own in it, just to name a few.

It's in the nature of things to change, but change breaks hearts, too.

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MichaelFeb 10, 2015
@nuzzybear @nomoreno It's California and we have Prop 13 which means those older residents are probably paying about $100 in property taxes capped at a 2% increase per year since the late 70's. And they're allowed to transfer it to a new place in CA if they move.

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plainjane77 Feb 10, 2015
I don't think that the author truly understands the nature of his neighbors' complaints. The government supported and pretty much required redlining the neighborhood, which depressed property values and increased the costs of obtaining a loan, robbing Black residents of their wealth. The city/municipality created a "ghetto" atmosphere by marrying any police presence with harassment and brutality that goes unpunished so residents have a choice between ignoring criminal behavior or calling cops who end up being more trouble than they're worth. Burned out bulbs from street lights aren't replaced with regularity, garbage pickup is sporadic, potholes are left to linger for years and complaints to city hall go unanswered. Businesses won't open their doors in a dump, so you have a food desert and lack of job opportunity as well.

Now some young white people decide that this neighborhood is the new hot spot and low and behold! Look at those brand new streetlights! Here's officer friendly who's here to protect you and is polite while doing it! Potholes are fixed. Garbage pickup is regular. Then of course, businesses move in because private investment usually follows good public infrastructure. The current residents have misplaced their anger at the gentrifiers, but the anger is not without good cause.

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nomoreno MEMBER Feb 10, 2015
@plainjane77 Potholes fixed in Oakland? Sorry, not in any neighborhood, good or bad.

Nor is trash cleaned up or dumped furniture and other stuff cleaned up.

You want it done, get the neighbors together and do it yourself.

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MuckyDuckFeb 10, 2015
@plainjane77 Something that I've often wondered about the disparities in the way services are performed in various neighborhoods is whether or not community involvement has anything to do with it. We bought our house in a predominantly Hispanic neighborhood just before it began to change, and as white people have moved in, I've noticed an uptick in organized community activism. When we first moved here, we didn't even have a

neighborhood association. People were friendly and we had no problem getting along with anyone, but it was not at all organized. As new residents have moved in, I've noticed more people knocking on doors and a new website has gone up and flyers promoting neighborhood meetings to discuss issues, etc. Some of this has caused a small amount of resentment among older residents. It's as if all these white people have not only moved in, but have decided that they're going to take control of the hood. On the other hand, there were some serious needs that weren't being met; a few empty lots where people were just dumping their garbage, a serious problem with stray and unvaccinated dogs roaming around (pretty serious if you have small kids, as we did then), etc. People just lived with this stuff. And it took some effort, but eventually more of the older residents got on board.

I'm not saying the problems you describe are not based on prejudice or whatever, but the thing about a community is that one often has to make a lot of noise to get the attention of city hall. You factor in the notoriously low rate of voting in poorer areas, and one can imagine why local politicians do so little about them. You've got to make yourself engaged. If you care, other people will care, too.

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MuckyDuckFeb 10, 2015

@plainjane77 I want to add: I know there are many social/economic issues that explain the disenfranchisement of poor people and minorities. Those are things that have to be addressed. But there are solutions. Of course a well-maintained neighborhood is not likely to stop gentrification. If anything, it would probably just encourage it even more.

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nomoreno MEMBER Feb 10, 2015

@MuckyDuck @plainjane77 You can bug the city public works and get some action, however sporadic.

But in our neighborhood, we have some neighbors who do trash pickups and creek cleanups, and when people leave their couches and what not in a public space, notices go up in the neighborhood online groups, and eventually either a resident, business owner or perhaps the city does come pick it up.

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MuckyDuckFeb 10, 2015

@nomoreno @MuckyDuck @plainjane77 Yeah, we've done the same thing. Sometimes you do have to carry some of the load yourself. But there are some issues in Houston with this sort of thing. We have a lot of elderly people in our neighborhood, and it's not really possible for them to do things like that.

One thing that drives me bananas is the rather careless way people toss trash out of their cars. I can't go a day without finding a beer can in my yard. Just basic respect for crissakes. I don't believe in "broken windows" policing but I do believe in keeping things tidy. No reason for that crap.

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shysterinutero MEMBER Feb 10, 2015

@MuckyDuck @plainjane77 There is probably a high correlation between the amount of time you can muster to organize yourselves and the relative stability of your economic life. Stability is both a marker for and a result of steady employment and homeownership.

One of the hallmarks and debilitating effects of poverty is the instability it causes in all other phases of life. It is both a cause of and a contributor to poor economic existence.

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J P McMahon MEMBER Feb 10, 2015

@MuckyDuck @plainjane77 I went through exactly the same thing when I bought a house in a transitional neighborhood, except that we had to run out crack dealers too. The first thing our newly formed, and pretty informal neighborhood association did was do an all day trash pick up. The mayor of the small city showed up with work gloves to help, and we filled a couple of roll off dumpsters the city provided. From that day on, everything improved.

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Question?Feb 10, 2015

@plainjane77 And before it was minority it was middle class. Most of the middle class people had to sell their houses at a loss in order to escape the crime and other quality of life issue. What of their losses? Why is it always a one way street? The current owners at least get to cash out.

This revitalized neighborhood will generate tax revenue which is turn will support the programs the disadvantaged need. So you have a choice, one big ghetto ala Detroit, or gentrification and revitalization.

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nuzzybearFeb 10, 2015

@Question? @plainjane77 Your questions assume that minority neighborhoods are never middle class, are filled with crime, and have a poor quality of life.

I doubt you wear a white hood, but maybe try for a little more complexity in your thinking.

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2 LikeReply

Question?Feb 10, 2015

@nuzzybear @Question? @plainjane77 There are minority neighborhoods that are middle class. Chatham and Pill Hill in Chicago are good examples. Oakland may have fit that profile in the beginning but by the 80's not so much.

Chicago has seen the same changes. Lincoln Park, one of the wealthiest neighborhoods, was once one of the worst.

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shysterinutero MEMBER Feb 10, 2015

@Question? @plainjane77 In this case specifically, the government and banks "redlined" the area which meant it would be almost impossible to buy or sell a house profitably, and they did that not based on crime or any other quality of life issue, but because there were "coloreds and orientals" living nearby.

Racism: pure, simple, ugly, and explicit, caused the initial decline of the neighborhood.

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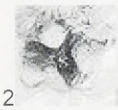

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Question? Feb 10, 2015

@shysterinutero @Question? @plainjane77 Yes, redlining was devastating. It also contributed to white flight since the original residents understood the financial impact.

But quality of life issues matter too.

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Still Anonymous Feb 10, 2015

@plainjane77 The author fully acknowledges the legitimacy of those issues. It is like you didn't even read the article.

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Matt1234 Feb 10, 2015

@plainjane77 Oh I think she understands, she wrote a very nice article about it.

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J P McMahon MEMBER Feb 10, 2015

@plainjane77 It's not the new neighbors fault that the neighborhood got redlined, and then got put on the pay no mind list by the municipality. The people that redlined and the city officials that treated that neighborhood with contempt? *They're dead now.* The residents can be angry, but they are angry at ghosts. The people who have just moved in have nothing to do with the bad stuff that went down, and if they are bringing up the neighborhood, they should be welcomed with open arms.

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Michael Feb 10, 2015

@plainjane77 Sorry but the city can't be bothered to fix the streetlight in front of my place and the median that I pay $500 per year to maintain is overgrown with weeds until I get pissed off and go weed it myself. And this is a relatively wealthy neighborhood. Tell me how all the white folks get all the perks. I'm not even getting what I paid for.

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Alabama_Al Feb 10, 2015
@Michael

Um ... you're directly accessed $500/year to maintain a median? I mean, is "Median maintenance: $500.00" what shows on your tax receipt?

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Humpy McKlown Feb 10, 2015
Great article. Thanks!

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shysterinutero MEMBER Feb 10, 2015
@Template I would think that more likely the "born white and able-bodied and the beneficiaries of good educations at great universities" is most relevant. A solid education and good steady jobs goes further towards qualifying for a mortgage than a down payment does. You can still buy a home with little or no down payment, it costs more in PMI and a slightly higher interests rate, but it's the ability ot repay in the future, not the loan to equity ratio, that most effects whether someone will lend you the money to buy a home.

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EspyGFeb 10, 2015
@Template Modest is relative, particularly to the purchase price of the house. It could have been $5,000 or $30,000. Either way, its not the reason they were able to buy the house, it just helped them.

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C2H5OH Feb 10, 2015
@Template @EspyG

per Zillow:

Sold 2011 for $359,000

Assuming 20% = $71,800

Todays Zestimate = $459K

Property taxes in 2012 = $1,951

2014 = $6,111

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FortitudineFeb 10, 2015
@Template *why is that described as "modest"?*

The eye of the beholder. When my father passed away in 2013 he left each of his seven children $30,000. The spousal unit and I thought that was a pretty darn nice chunk of change. The sibling who is married to the lawyer (latte-drinking, Saab-driving, etc) was disappointed at the smallness of the legacy.

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not quite learned hand Feb 10, 2015
I love the history of old buildings because I grew up in a Queen Anne Victorian that my parents completely retored themselves. You cannot get quality craftsmanship like that anymore.

However, I can unguilty enjoy it unlike the author because no wave of gentrification ever pushed out the "historic" population in the neighborhood. Also, does no one care that outside people coming in are salvaging these old buildings? It is magical to see pictures of

an abandoned, no electricity having house side by side with with a house reinstated to its former glory.

If these people are just coming in and tearing everything down to rebuild terrible condos, they can go to h*ll.

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Seed Drill Feb 10, 2015
@Template @not quite learned hand It's the tearing down historic structures that's the problem. Here, there have been a few century plus mills converted into condos. Win-win. Also, I don't think anyone's complaining about abandoned strip malls or burned out warehouses going.

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FortitudineFeb 10, 2015
@Template @not quite learned hand It's not the building of condos. It's the people who (as happened in my youngest sister's neighborhood) buy a modest little 20's frame bungalow, tear it down and put up a pretentious beige brick monstrosity that squats like a giant, hideous toad in a neighborhood of modest little 20's frame bungalows.

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shysterinutero MEMBER Feb 10, 2015
@Fortitudine @Template @not quite learned hand See, that's one of the few upsides to living surrounded by republicans in a mid-western suburb. We don't believe government should tell you what to do with your business, but we will defend to the death the right of government to tell you what your house should look like.

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Seed Drill Feb 10, 2015

@shysterinutero @Fortitudine @Template @not quite learned hand God, Southern Republicans (and what few native Democrats are left) will bring out their guns if you try to say they can't maintain a junk heavy equipment graveyard in front of their trailer anywhere they own a plot of land.

Zoning is one of the most contentious local issues, and it crosses party lines, pitting transplants like myself against the born and bread-ers.

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nuzzybearFeb 10, 2015

@Template @not quite learned hand The problem: the architect of condos is never inspired to drive by them and proudly sigh at their accomplishment.

Inspiration and beauty are important things too - put the condos in a place that's as ugly and utilitarian as they are.

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shysterinutero MEMBER Feb 10, 2015

@nuzzybear @Template @not quite learned hand How many houses do you think have an architect as part of the process of their building? Maybe one or two percent?

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nuzzybearFeb 10, 2015

@shysterinutero @nuzzybear @Template @not quite learned hand Exactly - most are prefabricated and clicked together like legos on site. Why tear down something with individuality and character to put something like that up?

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LyssaIrFeb 10, 2015

@nuzzybear @shysterinutero @Template @not quite learned hand Because it allows more people to have a safe, comfortable, affordable place to live? Old houses are nice in a lot of ways, but they are not nice in a lot of ways, too.

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nuzzybearFeb 10, 2015

@Lyssalr @nuzzybear @shysterinutero @Template @not quite learned hand I agree with that goal - but I would prefer that one not be sacrificed for the other. There are plenty of places that you can stick a condo into without tearing down something beautiful and unique.

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LyssaIrFeb 10, 2015

@nuzzybear @Lyssalr @shysterinutero @Template @not quite learned hand Yes, we'd all prefer that trade-offs never exist and we could have everything that we want without cost. Putting the condo in other locations is always going to involve another cost, such as location, expense, etc.

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shysterinutero MEMBER Feb 10, 2015

@nuzzybear @Lyssalr @shysterinutero @Template @not quite learned hand But there is very little that is truly beautiful and unique. Look at the house here, it is not beautiful and unique,it was clicked together on sight with that day's legos.

I grew up in a 150 year old house, I love it because of my family's history in it. But it looks like all the other 150 year old houses in that town, and it's environmentally a disaster with no insulation. If economics justified tearing it down and putting up condos that would not have any effect on any legacy of architectural heritage.

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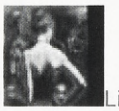
1  LikeReply

Still Anonymous Feb 10, 2015

@not quite learned hand The author did not "push anyone out." He bought the house from its black previous owner who inherited lots of property from his mother.

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LyssaIrFeb 10, 2015

@Still Anonymous @not quite learned hand Yeah, that's where I come down, too. He engaged in a transaction in which everyone benefited - the prior owner (to whom the money was worth more than the house), his family (to whom the opposite applies), even the neighbors (assuming that the author is a good neighbor and makes the neighborhood better than it would be if the house were sitting empty). This is so much angst over nothing at all.

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TheMerchantFeb 10, 2015

Good perspective and an interesting read. I just bought a house in an area of St. Paul at the early stage of similar changes. The conflicts are just beginning, including some really ugly harassment of a couple that bought an older house on a double lot and planned to raze it and build two new ones. They ended up backing down, but as your article illustrates, change is inevitable. The best planning involves that where standards for new development serve to preserve the neighborhood's character.

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not quite learned hand Feb 10, 2015

@TheMerchant Yeah, I care more about preserving the integrity of the historic buildings more than anything else. The author was right that social movements of people into and out of areas is inevitable. It's tilting at windmills to halt that.

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shysterinutero MEMBER Feb 10, 2015

@not quite learned hand @TheMerchant What's historic about these types of buildings? They were the cookie cutter, Levittown homes of their times, generally built as inexpensively as possible so that the working class could afford them. The land and building materials readily available determined their style and construction more than any aesthetic concern.

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penny white Feb 10, 2015
I wish I were Ta-Nehisi Coates so I could give this article the response it deserves.

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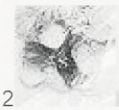
2 LikeReply

XFeb 10, 2015
@penny white you mean by banning and deleting comments? (He's sort of infamous for being an a--hole on his blog at the Atlantic)

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maenadsdanceFeb 10, 2015
@X @penny white If you thinkTa-Nehisi Coates is an a-hole on his blog, it speaks more about your character than his. His is one of the few comment sections where it is possible to have intelligent conversations about race; Slate is a wasteland in comparison. The banhammer is the only thing that keeps the trolls in control.

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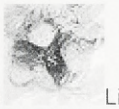
1 LikeReply

My Kids Need Wine Feb 10, 2015
This was a fascinating read! Now I want to track the history of my little house.

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4 LikeReply

RetiredinmaerimFeb 10, 2015
Well Mr. Brock. you are really cool. You come from who knows where and steal jobs and housing from those born and raised in Oakland. And then you waste your time trying to justify that. You could have saved some time and just asked some old timers.

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2 LikeReply

CarolineFeb 10, 2015

@Retiredinmaerim

Did you read the article? At all?

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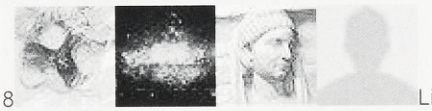

8 LikeReply

davem_or Feb 10, 2015

@Caroline @Retiredinmaerim Trolls don't read.

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5 LikeReply

RetiredinmaerimFeb 13, 2015

@davem_or @Caroline @Retiredinmaerim So what is your problem @davem, you brain dead ?

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LikeReply

nuzzybearFeb 10, 2015

@Caroline @Retiredinmaerim If his username is any indication, there's a good chance he identifies with some who get the brunt of gentrification: older people who lose their houses due to being unable to pay the increased taxes. Maybe go a little easy on him.

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LikeReply

AJFeb 10, 2015

@nuzzybear @Caroline @Retiredinmaerim I thought Prop 13 was supposed to prevent that. My parents would have likely been forced out of their home in a gentrifying neighborhood without it.

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nuzzybearFeb 10, 2015

@AJ @nuzzybear @Caroline @Retiredinmaerim It helps, but there are gaps - especially if the property value increases by more than 2% per year.

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AJFeb 10, 2015

@nuzzybear @AJ @Caroline @Retiredinmaerim But >2% shouldn't be a problem - or any more of a problem than a 2% increase. At that rate, it takes nearly 40 years for property taxes to double, which is something that can be planned for. Someone in California who has been in their home since the passage of Prop 13 might well have seen their property value increase by several thousand percent, while their property taxes would have increased by about 100%.

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RetiredinmaerimFeb 13, 2015

@Caroline @Retiredinmaerim So what part of my comment did you have a problem with ? Oh that is right, your from San Diego.

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LikeReply

CarolineFeb 10, 2015

I'm from San Diego, thanks for the little East Bay history lesson! I found it very interesting.

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RafaelHurtsFeb 10, 2015

"We found another description of the area in the same period prepared by the federally backed Home Owners' Loan Corporation in 1937: `occasionally there are several blocks which are practically free of coloreds or Orientals, but ... certain blocks ... are nearly 100% Negro and constantly spreading.' Based on that assessment, the section of Oakland including my neighborhood had been assigned the HOLC's worst loan-risk grade, and on the corporation's maps, the area was colored red. `Redlining', as it became known, meant that people in the area couldn't qualify for federally guaranteed loans, or pretty much any loans, to buy, build, or renovate houses. Redlining operated in concert with racially restrictive covenants that prohibited property owners from selling or leasing to certain groups, especially blacks."

.

What was the motivation? Were they concerned that property values would likely decrease over time due to demographic changes, and therefore if a property had to be foreclosed the lender was unlikely to get his investment back?

If so, they were not only unfair to black people, but they were also unfair to any bank that had previously issued still-active mortgages in that neighborhood -- making it a virtual certainty that _their_ loans would become less safe.

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MuckyDuckFeb 10, 2015

@RafaelHurts I think it's safe to say that our concept of risk is deeply influenced by things that are not always rational. We shouldn't assume banks are beyond this.

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shysterinutero MEMBER Feb 10, 2015

@RafaelHurts This was the early days of standardization of mortgage lending and the government support for mortgage securitization, probably the first time anyone had assigned a standardized risk to areas as a whole.

The process allowed banks to create more mortgages and stabilize and increase home ownership. But, areas where minorities lived were viewed, with some economic justification if wholly absent any sense of ethics, to be more risky and therefore not appropriate for the

government to guarantee some of the risk of lending. There was also enough blatant racism that lots of people thought that minorities simply weren't worth the effort needed to improve their well being, especially in the face of constrained resources.

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wisteriaFeb 10, 2015

I enjoyed this article. Maria Ampara Ruize de Burton wrote about the squatters taking over the land from Spanish rancheros in her 1885 novel The Squatter and the Don. Her sympathies lay with the Spanish, who had no legal protection and little sympathy from the community, and her conclusions are ultimately the same as Winstead's.

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3 LikeReply

GGreeneFeb 10, 2015

"...the fact that we'd been born white and able-bodied and the beneficiaries of good educations at great universities."

Gag~! Excuse me, I've gone to be sick...

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7 LikeReply

RafaelHurtsFeb 10, 2015

@GGreene What is depressing is that two working able-bodied well-educated people have to rely on a small family inheritance to own a house in a neighborhood that was built for _working-class_ people.

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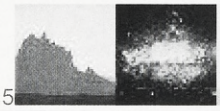
15  LikeReply

barclayFeb 10, 2015

@GGreene You forgot to mention the bequest.

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Matt1234 Feb 10, 2015

@GGreene I did not like that sentence either. Why do people feel guilty when things go as they ought to? Do I feel bad that I had two loving parents who helped me, and taught me a work ethic, and expected me to go to college (not a great university,but it turns out still can get a good job wherever your degree is from!) and helped me out occasionally? Not really. I feel lucky. I am going to try to do the same for my kids. There are lots of comments on here about the inheritance. I will tell you with certainty though, the most important things I got from my family was not my color or cash.

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1 LikeReply

BASFeb 10, 2015

@Matt1234 @GGreene I don't see why people think acknowledging that is "feeling guilty". He should not feel guilty for being born white and able-bodied. But he recognizes that those things have made his life different from someone who was not born white or able-bodied.

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Kate the Cursed Feb 10, 2015

Agreed.

He's had certain advantages. He is neither guilty for nor oblivious to them.

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icemilkcoffeeFeb 10, 2015

@Matt1234 @GGreene " I will tell you with certainty though, the most important things I got from my family was not my color or cash"

Easy for you to say, when you got both from your family.

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1 LikeReply

Matt1234 Feb 10, 2015
@icemilkcoffee @Matt1234 @GGreene I suppose it is. It is true nonetheless.

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Scandinavian Justice 2 Feb 10, 2015
Gentrification? I thought a Slate Scold already told us not to use this word.

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2 LikeReply

FinneusFeb 10, 2015
@Scandinavian Justice This may surprise you but Slate is an online editorial magazine that publishes articles written by different people with different opinions.

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8 LikeReply

Big Bad Woof Feb 10, 2015
@Finneus @Scandinavian Justice

Well, what else do you expect from a Slate Scolder.

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J P McMahon MEMBER Feb 10, 2015
I really enjoyed this article, which obviously took considerable research on the author's part. It also made me think of the increasing level of technological sophistication required for the land to go from aboriginal settlement area, to ranch, to smallholder farm, to residential community, to the type of dense housing development shown in the first photo. The roads, water lines, storm and sanitary sewers, electric, phone, and cable lines, and the infrastructure they led to weren't there to begin with, and didn't happen by magic. It's amazing how all of it was developed and then put into use so that all of those people could live in that neighborhood over a few generations, with each home owner having yet another amenity to make their life more comfortable.

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5 LikeReply

milkieFeb 10, 2015

I think having the name Brock Winstead already means its gentrification.

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6 Like Reply

JanFeb 9, 2015

mm, I appreciate looking at the grand scheme of things and the longue duree and all that, but to suggest that the story of gentrification in Oakland let alone the story of this particular house begins "like the story of most of California" with "the Huchiun band of the Ohlone people" is blather. I also fail to see how the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo is in any way germane to the topic at hand. Too small a peg to hang a general history of California on.

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Seed Drill Feb 10, 2015

@Jan Yep, the article would have benefited greatly by being parsed greatly. Start from the time contractors first bought the land, go from there.

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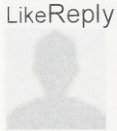

Mike Walker Feb 10, 2015

@Jan As a journalist myself, I think I can guess what happened here: when you start writing a piece like this, you start (at least I do) with general background and everything you know of writing from college—the big picture, giving the reader context—seems imperative. It's easy to take that too far. I'm writing a piece myself right now on SF's Chinatown and realized my entire first paragraph will probably need to go because it repeats facts everyone in SF already knows. But you start writing that way, almost as pre-writing, to collect your thoughts. I'm guessing the author here did this and it got left in the article.

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Like Reply

Mike Walker Feb 9, 2015

I hope Slate runs more work like this and that it is widely-shared and read. This is first-rate writing. Please, more articles like this and less about "why do gay guys just love musicals?" or "let's spend two minutes talking about a soundbite from an interview published by

another site about some celeb you're sick of anyways". (Note: I'm gay myself so that remark is not homophobic, just world-weary of how silly some things have become.)

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13 LikeReply

AJFeb 10, 2015
@Mike Walker Well why do you like musicals so much?

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LikeReply

Mike Walker Feb 10, 2015
@AJ @Mike Walker I don't, haha. I like spy movies. I'm a bad gay.

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1 LikeReply

Solar SD Feb 9, 2015
Oh my Callfornia has a history! We thought it just sprung up. Welcome to the wild west.

I subscribe to Boom but apparently overlooked this piece.

Resources

These titles are jumping-off points for further research. The knowledgeable librarians and archivists at Oakland Public Library's Oakland History Room and the African American Museum & Library at Oakland can help you find additional information. These two treasured resources, both located in downtown Oakland, have vast collections of archival primary source materials, including newspaper articles, journals, photos, postcards and scrapbooks.

The Golden Gate Branch Library has a special relationship with the African American Museum & Library at Oakland. In 1982, the East Bay Negro Historical Society, a citizen-led initiative, was invited to establish an African American collection in the Golden Gate Branch, the first library in Oakland to have a predominantly African American focus. Later, the organization changed its name to the Northern California Center for Afro-American History & Life. In 1994, this organization joined with the City of Oakland to create the African American Museum & Library at Oakland (AAMLO). AAMLO reopened in the former Charles S. Greene Library in 2002.

To learn more or make an appointment, visit www.oaklandlibrary.org.

AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM & LIBRARY AT OAKLAND

Shades of North Oakland photo collection, 1999.

The Official Black Panther Party Historical Tour Guide, Huey Newton Foundation, circa 2007.

Visions Toward Tomorrow, Lawrence P. Crouchett, Lonnie Bunch III, Martha Kendall Winnacker, 1989.

GOLDEN GATE BRANCH LIBRARY

Early Emeryville Remembered: Historical Essays, Emeryville Historical Society, 1996.

From Labor to Reward, Martha C. Taylor, 2016.

Temescal Legacies: Narratives of Change from a North Oakland Neighborhood, Jeff Norman, 2006.

OAKLAND PUBLIC LIBRARY, MAIN BRANCH

Killing the Messenger, Thomas Peele, 2012.

Oakland Tribune archives, https://newspaperarchive.com/.
Access at any Oakland Public Library.

Resources Continued

OAKLAND PUBLIC LIBRARY'S OAKLAND HISTORY ROOM

Emeryville Historical Society quarterly journals, 1990 – present.

Golden Gate Neighborhood clippings file.

Images of America: Emeryville, Emeryville Historical Society, 2005.

WEBSITES

East Bay Yesterday, a podcast series by local historian Liam O'Donoghue, covering many underrecognized local heroes, https://eastbayyesterday.com/.

Emeryville Historical Society, the group's online presence includes some articles from their journals, https://emeryvillehistorical.org/.

Oakland Heritage Alliance, a non-profit that connects Oakland's past to its present and future through walking tours and a newsletter, http://oaklandheritage.org/.

Oakland Wiki, a crowd-sourced pool of knowledge started in 2012 about many of Oakland's people, places and events, https://localwiki.org/oakland/.

COMMONS ARCHIVE

GOLDEN GATE LIBRARY LOCAL COLLECTION

SERIES 1

A Renovator's History

Blacks in Oakland: 1852 - 1987

Community Profile: Golden Gate Neighborhood

Golden Gate Conversations

Golden Gate Neighborhood Conditions

Golden Gate Walking Tour

I Must Not Forget

On Becoming A Historic Resident

Thanks

This local collection series is born from the wisdom and work of many Oakland local historians, neighbors, librarians, researchers, thinkers, creatives and writers. I am deeply grateful for their generosity in sharing their knowledge and expertise. And to you, readers and researchers, the potency of this collection lives on through your curiosity.

History is never finished: you can continue to reveal the complexity of the story of this place by sharing your thoughts and experiences on the Commons Archive cards.

Design & Layout: Kris Harzinski & Tina Wolfe
Editing & Proofing: Daniela Blei

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Kala Art Institute's mission is to help artists sustain their creative work over time through its Artist-in-Residence and Fellowship Programs, and to engage the community through exhibitions, public programs, and education.

PRINT PUBLIC

Kala Art Institute's Print Public program, an arts-integrated approach to urban planning and community activation, was conceived in collaboration with the University of Berkeley's College of Environmental Design and its [IN] CITY program, UCB's Department of City & Regional Planning, and UC Transportation Center, with funding support from the Irvine Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts Our Town program.

Oakland Public Library

Your Oakland Public Library empowers all people to explore, connect, and grow.

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This project is supported by the Oakland City Council and funded by the City of Oakland's Cultural Funding Program.

CREATIVEWORKFUND

This project was made possible in part by a grant from The Creative Work Fund, a program of the Walter and Elise Haas Fund that also is supported by The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

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CALIFORNIA ARTS COUNCIL

Advancing California through the arts and creativity.

About marksearch

Cultural researcher, literacy educator and artist Sue Mark, a long-time North Oakland neighbor, has a keen interest in over-looked stories. As part of the marksearch team, she designs ways for people to share their stories for empowerment and preservation. With conversation as her primary tool, she develops interactive projects that make space for social memory. Whether pushing a work cart designed as a mobile park or towing a traveling billboard by tandem bike, marksearch engages people to share personal histories that create lasting neighborhood narratives.

Since 2000, Sue has partnered with Bruce Douglas (her husband), an engineer and inventor with a passion for repurposing materials. Their practice as the marksearch team blends their diverse skills and shared life. From neighbor-led walking discussions to sidewalk conversations, commemorative plaques and murals recognizing the collective knowledge of many generations, their projects move beyond aesthetic experience. The marksearch team has implemented interdisciplinary projects with community groups, historians, urban planners and municipalities throughout Oakland and across the globe.

marksearch.org

Of 10 copies, this book is number 1

PHOTO KEY (IMAGES LEFT TO RIGHT)

FARMERS' MARKET Phat Beets Food Justice Market & CSA during Communities' Crossing, a series of neighborhood history events 2015	**NEIGHBORHOOD CELEBRATION** Promotion for 'Love Our Neighborhood Day,' a one-day event closing part of San Pablo Avenue 2014	**LONG-TIME NEIGHBOR** Laura Ingram, activist & founder of SPAGGIA neighborhood group, at 'Love Our Neighborhood Day' celebration 2014 Photo by Pamela Palma	**GARDEN** Native planting by neighbors along Stanford Avenue's median 2014 Photo by Pamela Palma	**NEIGHBORHOOD HOME** Victorian-style house circa 1880, possibly built by Charles Klinkner 2014 Photo by Gene Anderson
HISTORIC SITE Oakland Public Library's Golden Gate Branch Library, a Carnegie endowed building constructed in 1918 2015 Photo by Lorah Gross	**NEIGHBORHOOD ACTIVIST** Black Panther member Melvin Dickson leading a tour for the North Oakland Restorative Justice Council 2014	**HISTORIC SITE** Mural painted in 2011 by Luke McCabe on the neighborhood's market, 59th Street & San Pablo Avenue 2016	Commons Archive COMMONS ARCHIVE COMMONS ARCHIVE Commons Archive Commons Archive COMMONS ARCHIVE Commons Archive Commons Archive	**NEIGHBORHOOD CELEBRATION** Golden Gate Branch Library's block party to launch Commons Archive 2017 Photo by Amber Hoy
LONG-TIME NEIGHBOR Josephine Lee, founder & director of the Golden Gate Branch Library's Summer Jazz Concerts 2015 Photo by Matt Dibble	**HISTORY RESOURCE** Emeryville Historical Society Journal, a quarterly about the area in publication since 1988	**HISTORIC SITE** The Fratellanza Club, still active neighborhood Italian social club founded in 1932 at 1140 66th Street 2014		**NEIGHBORHOOD HOMES** Engraving of Charles Klinkner, Golden Gate real estate developer 1883 Courtesy Oakland Public Library's Oakland History Room

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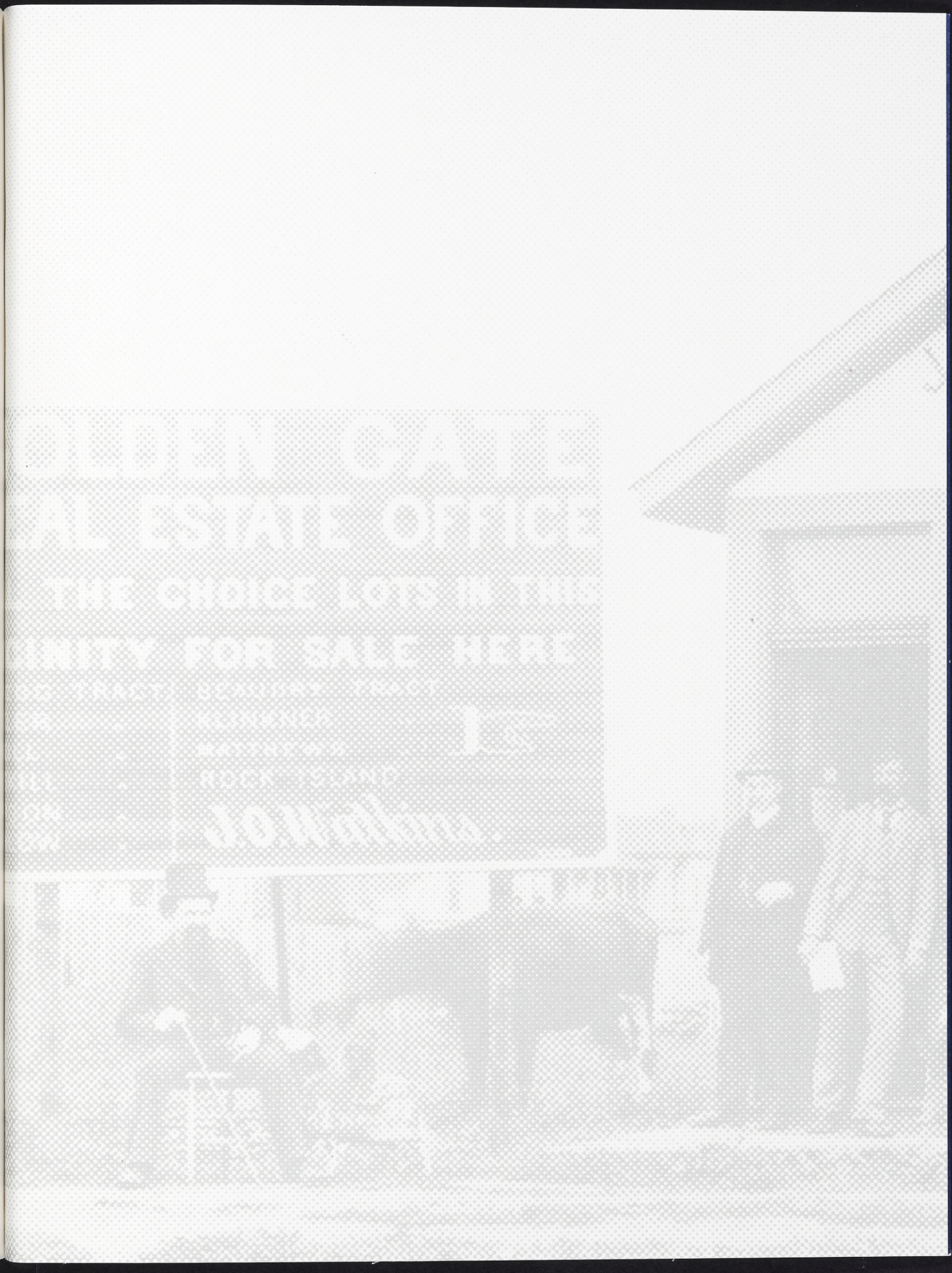
REAL ESTATE OFFICE
FOR SALE HERE

PHOTO PREVIOUS PAGE

Charles Klinkner's real estate 'headquarters' in the town of Golden Gate, 1885

Courtesy Emeryville Historical Society

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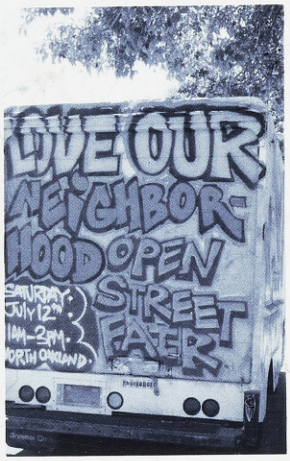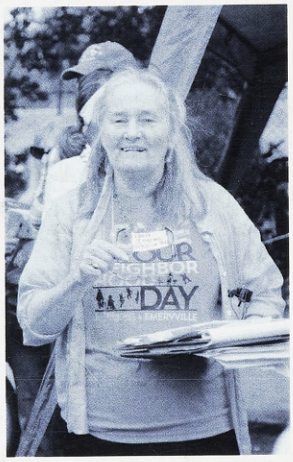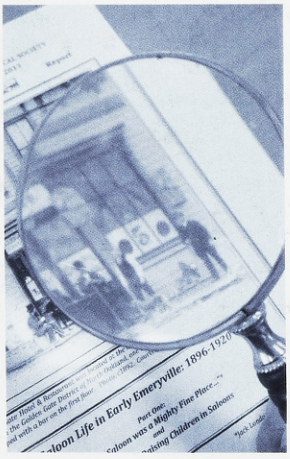
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